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Minnie Maddern Fiske

Frontispiece.

MRS. FISKE

BY

FRANK CARLOS GRIFFITH

Formerly Acting Manager for Mrs. Langtry in the United States and in Great Britain, Formerly Acting Manager for Margaret Mather, and Acting Manager for Mrs. Fiske from 1897 to 1910.

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TO

THE ACTORS' FUND OF AMERICA

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PORTRAITS OF MRS. FISKE WHEN A CHILD.

In "Damon and Pythias." About Six Years.
"Eva" in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." About Eleven Years.

Facing Page 11.

I

CHILDHOOD DAYS

AWARE of my long association with the subject of these lines, I have been actually pestered by my friends, and perhaps others, with suggestions that I jot down some of the characteristics, incidents, impressions, and conclusions gathered during many years of close business relations with the foremost actress of our times; and that I am writing this is evidence that I have at last yielded, although I assure my readers at the outset that in *this* case familiarity has *not* bred contempt, but on the contrary the highest admiration for the accomplishments and genius of the subject of this work.

Yet I do not purpose to write a biography of that eminently brilliant woman, and chronological facts and figures will not be attempted. Neither am I a historian, but just a jotter down of "unconsidered trifles"—trifles

at the time possibly, but in the aggregate trifles that attain a mountain in size.

And, dear lady, I hope the result of my jottings will not impel you to exclaim, as I have heard you do on occasion, "Heaven save me from my friends!"

The beginnings of things are interesting, if for no other reason than to watch how they grow, and develop, and bud, and burst forth into fruition. The beginning of Minnie Maddern Fiske's existence,—for she it is of whom I shall write,—was in New Orleans, just back of the St. Charles Hotel, at or next to the corner of Baronne and Gravier streets, and here the little theatrical world of that city was made aware of the advent of a daughter to Tom Davey and his wife, Lizzie Maddern, on December 19, 1865, and offered its congratulations accordingly.

By this it will be seen that Mrs. Fiske's name was not Maddern at all,—and by the same token it was never Minnie either, for when named, she was called Marie Augusta Davey. Imagine Mrs. Fiske being encum-

bered with such a name for electric light signs now! There is a jingle and a musical charm to the name Minnie Maddern that Marie Augusta does not possess, but probably the donor of the name at the time it was bestowed,—presumably her mother,—had no premonition of the future necessity of a name that could be spoken with ease and facility, and it was an afterthought that gave rise to the name of Minnie Maddern.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that the year preceding the "borning" of little Minnie was one of strenuous activity, the early part of the year having witnessed the evacuation of Richmond, the surrender of Lee, and the assassination of Lincoln, these events having severally given great delight to those of one political persuasion and causing corresponding depression to those per contra.

Judging from my present knowledge of the natural gayety and lightness of Mrs. Fiske's disposition and of her greatest achievements, some of the events that crowded that year and influenced every mind must have been cheering

to the parents of the greatest comedienne of our times, otherwise we might have found Minnie Maddern later on playing the Lady Audleys, Lady Macbeths, Lucretia Borgias, and the like, to which rôles her natural impulses might have led her.

Heaven be praised that things are as they are, and not as they might have been! "Of all sad words of tongue or pen,"—yes, yes, I know of course you have heard it before, but it "fitted in," as Kleschna would have said, even though it was the worst rhyme Whittier was ever guilty of. I wonder what would have become of me if I had submitted such an atrocity, true as the sentiment is. However, that is neither here nor there.

Tom Davey was a manager in New Orleans, and he was the pioneer of the Theatrical Syndicate of these later days, for he was the first to manage a circuit of theaters, all of them down in that portion of the South, and the conditions surrounding theatrical travel then, *and* in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, must have been something fierce to contemplate. They

do not arouse enthusiastic encomiums at the present time, but *then*, in the days just following the Civil War, the barn-storming must have been a literal accomplishment. And yet excellent actors went into and came out of that crucible. The actor in the abstract probably does put up with more nerve racking, stomach annihilating, and unsanitary conditions than any other class of being on earth.

Davey, from my information, was probably a jolly good fellow, very much liked, a man's man and loved the jolly companionship and cameraderie of his associates. He doubtless was good to his wife, though not having much time to devote to domesticity, one can imagine, moving from place to place, now in New Orleans, then St. Louis or Detroit, so little Minnie was probably largely in the company of her mother, Lizzie Maddern, who was generally in the theater, with the baby "leashed" to a table leg while she studied a new part. During performances the infant was cradled in her wardrobe basket, until the system of the baby Minnie was saturated with the odor of the

stage, and became as much a part of her as the hair of her head or the fingers of her tiny hands.

The odor of the theater is as disinctly its own as is that of a drug store or an attar of roses manufactory, and when once "saturated" it is as difficult to rid one's self of it as to swim the English Channel or to loop the loop with an aeroplane. It "gets" you, it pickles you, as it were, in a brine of fascination, and like the scent of some powerful odor, it permeates every crevice of your system. Once the saturated solution is in the pores not all the skill of alchemy can separate you from it, or it from you. A particularly and ideally happy marriage on the part of the actress sometimes does the trick, but money very, very rarely. Indeed, money seems but to intensify the passion for the stage, and the desire is then frantically to plunge deeper and deeper into the mimic life—desire and gratification waxing mutually great on the other, till that day when a fortune has been dissipated and continuation of the life across the footlights becomes a necessity—perhaps a pleasure.

Minnie Maddern was "saturated" with this stage odor from her inception, and neither money nor marriage could keep her out of it long.

The little Minnie was in the dressing-room, or taken on the stage when the property plot called for "a live baby," until she could walk and talk, and then she did talk. The foundation of her career was laid early and laid well. She had the Maddern blood, pretty much all of the stage, the training of her mother, and the assistance of "Aunt Mary" Maddern. Mary Maddern, who died in April of the present year, was the sole survivor of the three Maddern sisters. The third sister, Emma Maddern, married Bob Stevens, and became the mother of Emily Stevens, who possesses to a marked degree the artistic temperament of her maternal ancestry.

Emma Maddern was the only one of the three Maddern sisters to ever reach the dignity of stardom, and was successful in the romping hoydens of the drama—of the '60's—the day of farces, the protean drama, and the stage

slavey. She was associated for some time with a play called "Nip the Crow," contemporaneously with Maggie Mitchell, Lotta, the Worrell Sisters, and others, and although not attaining the eminence of success that her professional sisters mentioned achieved, she was doubtless just as worthy of it and just as excellent an artiste as any of them.

The theater was little Minnie's element, and as she faced audiences before she knew anything, and has continued to face them from that time until this, such a thing as "breaking in" has never been known to her. She was born "broken in," and probably never experienced stage fright until she had "arrived" and stood on the dizzy height of eminence and realized what is expected of genius.

By the best writers Mrs. Fiske is generally acknowledged to be the greatest intellectual actress of our day, but what would she have been if the idiotic interpretation of some very good laws in several States, notably Massachusetts, Illinois and Louisiana, had been in vogue then? Of that more anon.

II

HER OWN PRODUCTIONS AS MINNIE MADDERN —MARRIAGE TO MR. FISKE—RETIREMENT

PHOTOGRAPHS of little Minnie are all of the child childish,—sometimes funny, as we look back upon such things, but generally they convey an idea of poise, self-reliance, and snap that children's portraits usually lack. Her tangle of auburn hair had a rather wayward appearance, as if each particular hair had a different opinion as to the proper angle of adjustment, compromising by letting each have its own sweet will. In short, it was unconventional, untrammeled by the rules of fashion, and was the index to her later achievements, for if anyone is untrammeled by tradition or rules or system, goodness knows Mrs. Fiske is.

Before she had attained her tenth year little Minnie Maddern had appeared with Barry Sullivan, Laura Keene, J. K. Emmet,

Lucille Western, Carlotta LeClercq, Mrs. Waller, Yanke Locke, Oliver Doud Byron, E. L. Davenport, Joseph Jefferson, John McCullough, Junius Brutus Booth, and Mrs. Scott Siddons, and that certainly is a record that should add to the importance of any thespian, young or old.

To hark back a little,—for I told you that chronological order would not always be observed in these notes,—her first real "appearance" is stated as having been after her mother had carefully assembled for her a Scottish kilt, in which she appeared and sang a song about Jamie coming over the meadow, or something to that effect. The first part that she played, however, is said to have been the Duke of York, in "Richard the Third," at Little Rock, Arkansas; but with what "eminent tragedian" she does not herself recall.

A little out of order again, but as it occurs to me I will say here that a person less given to reminiscence than Mrs. Fiske I cannot imagine.

Upon revisiting in her professional tours the

scenes of her childhood days one would naturally expect a great actress to remark, "Here is where I made my first appearance," or "Here I played the Widow Melnotte when I was only twelve," or some similar comment, but I do not recall that I ever heard Mrs. Fiske, in all our association, make the slightest allusion to persons or places, with one or two exceptions. One of these I here repeat.

She was appearing at Robinson's Opera House, Cincinnati, one of the school oases of her early life. As she entered the dressing room on the opening night she glanced about, and then at me, as if to determine in her mind whether or not it was safe to entrust me with the information. She then remarked that when a child she was brought into that room to see Mary Anderson in reference to playing some child character in one of her plays,—Ingomar, as she thought.

One step in advance in her profession led to another in rapid succession with Miss Maddern in those childhood days, and the marvel of it is, with the pace she advanced profession-

ally, how she ever found time for schooling. But she did, and the variety of school systems under which she studied should have kept her out of ruts, and very likely they did; for striking the theatrical antipodes of New Orleans and Montreal, Louisville, St. Louis, and Cincinnati, as the route of her mother's engagements lay, it is not to be supposed that they followed any approachment to any set plan.

This may have something to do with her wonderful versatility, and the breadth and scope of her talents. Who can tell?

When but twelve she played Louise in "The Two Orphans," and up to the time she was sixteen one part trod upon another's heels, so fast they followed.

The limit of age that now permits a child to appear upon the stage in several States is sixteen, and just reflect for a moment upon what she had accomplished up to that time.

The extraordinary thing about Mrs. Fiske's early career is that she should have been even *permitted* to play the range of characters that she did, and that she was acceptable in them is

a remarkable compliment to her intellectual capabilities, for not only was she young, but was petite as well.

Frequently a young woman who is physically well developed easily passes for a much older person, and the eye is satisfied even if the ear be not; but little Minnie *was* little, and held her audiences then by her genius, as she subsequently has continued to do.

Minnie Maddern, while she was yet sixteen, became a star in a play that she would consider to-day what the alphabet blocks of the kindergarten are to the architectural material of a museum of art. The work was "Fogg's Ferry," by Charles Callahan. The character she played was Chip, and from general report the piece was rubbish, but it served her purpose and she utilized it as another rung in the ladder that led upward toward fame.

This play was produced, not in Tuscaloosa or Skaneateles, but in New York City, and in the Park Theater, if you please, May, 1882—or thirty years ago. This was before electric lights, electric cars, automobiles, phonographs,

moving pictures, subways, or Hudson River tunnels. For a young woman still, Mrs. Fiske is an old frequenter of New York and its stage doors.

Onward and upward she climbed, her next character being in a play by Howard P. Taylor, called "Caprice." This came about in August, 1884, and it was in this play that she sang the song, still existent and always popular, "In the Gloaming."

Although very little known nowadays, Mrs. Fiske has a very sweet singing voice, and as she sat by the property gas log, with the lights turned low, and sang this sweet melody in a voice full of pathos and expression, it made an everlasting impression upon her hearers. I think I have heard more mention of this play and this song than of all of her other productions put together, and if I were to live a hundred years I think there would still crop up now and then some old man who would expatiate upon its wonderful charm as rendered by Minnie Maddern.

Once I remember having mentioned this sub-

"CAPRICE."

Facing Page 24.

ject to Mrs. Fiske, with the intimation that a revival of "Caprice" might be a good idea. She replied, "My dear Mr. Griffith, it is perfectly trivial, I do assure you, perfectly trivial." That is what Ibsen does for one.

In the cast of "Caprice," as played also at the Park Theater, were Arthur H. Forrest, who was later on with Mrs. Fiske in "Rosmersholm"; Charles Stanley, who played Philander; Melbourne McDowel, T. J. Herndon, H. Percy Brooke, Hudson Liston, Lillian Wallack, and her own Aunt Mary Maddern.

Mrs. Fiske owes much to her Aunt Mary, for in the famous actress' youth, when care and attention were needed, Aunt Mary bestowed much upon her, and Mrs. Fiske has never forgotten that fact or failed to show her appreciation, even at times when the task was the severest possible strain upon her.

"In Spite of All" followed "Caprice" about a year later, and it was in this production that Mrs. Fiske had in her support Mr. Richard Mansfield.

As Miss Maddern progressed she "lifted"

the support that accompanied her, and during all of the really important years of her professional career she has had the best support obtainable. To obtain the highest class support became very early a firmly fixed principle with her, that has never weakened; on the contrary, it strengthened and developed with the years and with the experience that made for knowledge. I may add that Eben Plympton and Selina Delaro were also in the original cast of this play. Mildred Aldrich, who witnessed a performance of the play, said of it later, "The third act was a great performance. I know no actress—and sweeping as this statement is, I do not wish to qualify it—who could have given to this scene the charm that Miss Maddern gave it." And this was before Minnie Maddern was twenty.

Her managers in those early days lost a deal of money on her, but like every star in the theatrical firmament of every land she had her strong territory as well as her weak. That is an odd thing about even the greatest stars of any age,—they will play in cities that are as

indifferent to their appearance there as to the weekly visit of Farmer Jones with a load of hay on Punkville Common. These towns they may *never* fully conquer. They may at times, with a play of unusual attractiveness to *them*, play to capacity business, and give their patrons the greatest satisfaction; while the next visitation, with another play, may be absolutely ignored. The unpleasant logic of this, to the star, is that it is the play solely, and not the performer, that has won their hearts and homage.

The play that followed "In Spite of All" was "Featherbrain," May 6, 1889, and that was also "Minnie Maddern's" last production, for she made her final appearance, February, 1890, at Toronto, in a revival of "In Spite of All," and on March 19, 1890, at Larchmont, N. Y., she was married to Harrison Grey Fiske, the owner, editor, and publisher of *The New York Dramatic Mirror*.

Probably not one of Minnie Maddern's early plays would stand the test of present day production. The plays that delight and enthrall

us when young seldom improve with age, or even hold their own, while the artists may steadily improve, and with each step advance to higher and higher altitudes, to look back with wonder upon the frail structures over which they have advanced. Strange to say, the plays that are long-lived,—and will probably never die,—are among the most rubbishy of plays, such, for instance, as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "East Lynne."

The "Minnie Maddern" died and, like with the Indian chiefs, everything was buried with her at that last performance in Toronto, and with the one allusion I have chronicled as referring to "Caprice" and the one reference to Mary Anderson, she never in all my time made mention of any play or part that she had ever played during what she has been pleased to term her "prehistoric days."

During the first sixteen years of her life,—the valuable, *inestimably* valuable years which foolish laws now prohibit children from putting to anything of use to them in later stage life,—Mrs. Fiske laid the solid foundation upon which

her later great success was builded, and during the next nine years she experimented with the material upon which the temple of her genius was to rise.

Colleges and education rank high in my estimation,—I would not lessen their value to the world one atom,—but the spark of genius greater than all the universities in Christendom, and the ability to *act*, is no more influenced by a college training than the darkness is dispelled by a single firefly.

Of all the great geniuses of the English stage, probably not one per cent. came to success through a college education. If it is in you to do anything, it will come out. Witness Abraham Lincoln.

I had the honor to manage a season of Margaret Mather at one time, and how much education do you suppose she had, poor girl? Almost none, and yet her Juliet and Leah are stage traditions.

Minnie Maddern had in her twenty-five years attracted the attention of nearly every actor and critic of note, and men of the critical

judgment and experience of Dion Boucicault the elder and Lawrence Barrett discerned and predicted then the heights to which she would climb; while during the period of retirement that marked the time between her "prehistoric" and her modern days Daniel Frohman remarked to me that her absence was "a distinct loss to the stage."

"MARY OF MAGDALA."

Facing Page 31.

III

"TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"—"BECKY SHARP"—"MARY OF MAGDALA"

CHARM of manner and the personal magnetism that one experiences when in the society of prominent stars does not always indicate that that charm and that manner will get over the footlights and into the very marrow of the audience. If that were so, Mrs. Langtry, whose business affairs I had the pleasure and the honor of managing in this country, in London and the United Kingdom, would have been a great actress. This she was not, although I do maintain that she was excellent in many parts. I mention this to illustrate the fact that when I first came into the "influence" of Mrs. Fiske's personality she was in retirement, and had been for over three years; but charming as was her manner toward me, it possessed no more charm than that of

the accomplished Jersey Lily. Subsequently I found that Mrs. Fiske was a human electric dynamo, while the other lady was a cold storage plant—both exceedingly useful, but one of them thrilled herself and her audiences with throbbing, pulsating life while the other "preserved" all the semblance of life in the otherwise unresponsive body.

It was in November of 1893 that Mrs. Fiske emerged from her retirement, and, as she has been pleased to term it, her "second time on earth" began. Mr. Fiske was probably alive to the fact that a jewel of rare value was being kept from the light of fame, and doubtless Mrs. Fiske was just as well aware that a fire stifled is not put out, and when one has passed all of the first twenty-five years of one's life on the stage the itch is incurable. Before she was twenty-eight the reincarnated Minnie Maddern appeared as Mrs. Fiske, in a play of her husband's manufacture.

This occurred at the Tremont Theater, Boston, and the "services" of A. M. Palmer were enlisted to arrange the contract, terms, etc.

He "arranged" them all right, and a better contract for Mr. Schofield and a worse one for his clients never came under my notice, for by its terms the theater took all the money and the Fiskes paid pretty nearly all the expenses.

I suppose there is an argument concealed there somewhere, to the effect that in the end things averaged up.

Mr. Fiske wrote the play, "Hester Crewe"—and in it Mrs. Fiske made a powerful personal impression; but the vehicle was not a success, and one week, with such a contract, was considered quite sufficient, and so poor "Hester" was packed in camphor and laid away.

More retirement then for Mrs. Fiske, who, to use an ugly simile, had emerged like the groundhog of ancient tradition and, failing to see her shadow in the sunlight of success, had retreated to her comfortable fireside and shut the door after her.

The fires still burned within her, however, the ambitious spark that never dies, and desultory appearances were made at intervals for

charities and such like, until the break was again made and the bid made for her old public's approval.

Have you ever stopped to think how soon actors are forgotten and how quickly the vacuum their withdrawal or death creates is closed up? Who misses Booth now, or Jefferson, or Denman Thompson, or William Warren, or Modjeska, or Janauschek, or Willard? Who was James Herne? What did Mansfield play? Do people go to the theater now since Irving died? Names written in sand, that one high tide of musical comedy erases; one "Merry Widow" and a surfeit of "Girl" plays utterly obliterate; and so when Mrs. Fiske made her next professional entrance upon the stage, to remain there, she had an entirely new world to conquer, and she set about it with a will, an indomitable will. She had not been given red hair for nothing.

After various attempts to pick up the golden thread where she had dropped it only a few years before, and with a variety of excellent or otherwise vehicles of exploitation, such as

"Doll's House," "Frou-Frou," "Caeserine," "Queen of Liars," "Divorçons," etc.; on March 2, 1897, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" brought a new public to her with whoops of admiration. She had persistently, patiently, and everlastingly kept at it, and Tess, her own Tess, not the Tess of the author Thomas Hardy, but a Tess that was the creation of her own brain, a Tess greater than Hardy ever dreamed of, set her on her feet so firmly that no event or combination of events or of antagonistic people could ever displace her.

There is no published biography of Mrs. Fiske extant, neither is there any collected data, but if I may be excused I will quote Mildred Aldrich once more, and Miss Aldrich knew Mrs. Fiske quite early in her career. Just previous to the triumph in "Tess,"—Miss Aldrich had written: "Yet one is, with all this, unable to feel that Minnie Maddern-Fiske has yet arrived." And although Mildred Aldrich was a keenly discerning woman, and is so still, I imagine she little knew how near Mrs. Fiske's

feet were to the home plate, as my baseball friends would say.

No, she had not "arrived," that is, not in the sense Miss Aldrich meant,—but that she had given some characterizations to the stage that have not been excelled, and possibly not equaled, is a pretty well established fact,—notably Cyprienne in "Divorçons," for a more delicate, exquisite, dainty, ingenuous bit of Dresden china impersonation never existed. She fairly reveled in Cyprienne, and every line she uttered, every attitude, every glance or movement, oozed the rich humor of true refined comedy. It was simply irresistible.

"Tess of the d'Urbervilles" was presented at the Fifth Avenue Theater, New York, March 2, 1897, and the cast on that occasion may be of interest.

Angel Clare	*Edward M. Bell.*
Alec. Stoke-d'Urberville	*Chas. Coghlan.*
John Durbeyfield	*John Jack.*
Abraham Durbeyfield	*Alice Pierce.*
Farmer Crick	*W. L. Branscombe.*
Jonathan	*Wilfrid North.*
Tim	*Alfred Hickman.*
James	*W. E. Butterfield.*
Bailiff	*W. L. Branscombe.*
Joan Durbeyfield	*Mary E. Barker.*
Tess	*Mrs. Fiske.*
Liza Lu	*Edith Wright.*
Marian	*Annie Irish.*
Retty	*Nellie Lingard.*
Izz	*Bijou Fernandez.*

The magnetic quality possessed by Mrs. Fiske was never more powerful than in her performance of Tess. Where McGregor sits is the head of the table, and where she was on the stage there followed the gaze of her audience. Throughout the whole pitiful tragic sequence of events Mrs. Fiske was calm, intense, all absorbing. She never shouted, posed, or became hysterical, and yet with the masterful repose that is her own chief characteristic she won point after point, scene after scene,

until the final fall of the curtain, when this "pure woman, faithfully depicted," is led away to her execution as a murderess.

Never was a murderess more loved and honored and respected by the spectators of a play than Tess, "poor Tess." It was the genius of the actress that won every heart; and all this, all the attention, all the lavish praise, in spite of a truly magnificent cast, for the performances given by Charles Coghlan, John Jack, and Mary Barker were gems of rare value.

During the rehearsals of "Tess" Mr. Coghlan cautioned Mrs. Fiske that an audience could not and would not remain quiet for so long a time as she remained off the stage in the murder scene, leaving the stage entirely deserted. Mr. Coghlan had occasion to admit his error, for her audiences were as one hypnotized, and sat breathless, listening for the audible evidence of the crime then being committed until Tess hastily reappeared with the murderous weapon in her hand. This scene of Mrs. Fiske's may well rank with that of any actress of any land and of any time.

In 1898 she produced two pieces,—"A Bit of Old Chelsea" and "Love Finds the Way," the first a charming little one act play, and the second an interesting study in mentality, a sort of exploitation of the Faith or Mind Cure business, whichever one chooses to call it. The central figure in the latter is a lame woman, with crutches, who, under great stress of mind and the necessity for instant action to save a life, flings away her supports and runs like a girl.

The following year brought out "Little Italy," another one act playlet, and the memorable production of "Becky Sharp," at the Fifth Avenue Theater, New York, September 12, 1899.

My conclusion as to Mrs. Fiske's abilities is that she is not a one act or "bit" actress, who depicts one little incident and goes off, but rather that all her work requires space; like a great artist who paints great pictures on large canvases, or a writer like Dickens, or Scott, or Charles Dudley Warner, who must needs take time to develop a great character and not

spring it all at once, with a tag on it as to its classification.

Thackeray gave a great character to the world in Becky Sharp, and Langdon Mitchell was the impressionistic disciple of Monet who slapped on the colors and gave to Mrs. Fiske his impressions of the salient features of the story. That he succeeded is a matter of theatrical history, and Mrs. Fiske walked out of the stage door of the Fifth Avenue Theater at the end of that New York engagement with the proud distinction of being firmly established as the greatest representative of high comedy of her time, and probably the equal of any that ever lived.

In a newspaper interview Mrs. Fiske once said, in referring to "Becky Sharp":

"There seems to be a common fatality with regard to our first performance of the play in New York. On the first night of its production in that city I played very badly; and five years later, on the first night of the revival of the play, I repeated this bad performance. These are the unhappy occurrences over which

actors grieve. The grief, I fear, is due to wounded vanity."

"Becky Sharp" was, and in my opinion still is, the masterpiece of her career. It is a gem without a flaw. The cast, too, was one of those consummate mosaics that she possesses a genius for assembling,—in fact, in every play that has been her own production this remarkable faculty for selection has been predominant.

I remember the revival of "Becky Sharp" at the Academy of Music later on, and Mrs. Fiske was at her wits' end for an actor who measured up to her idea of Dobbin. She had tried several without success, when one day, as she alighted at the stage door to attend a rehearsal, an actor who had been standing there to intercept her when she arrived barred her way and, as he lifted his hat, remarked: "I understand you want a man for Dobbin."

Mrs. Fiske gave one hasty glance that took him in from top to toe, and grasped him by the arm, as she replied, "Yes, I do," and literally dragged him into the theater.

Probably no actor was ever more astonished at the result of an application for an engagement than he was; and he played the part to, I believe, her entire satisfaction.

Mrs. Fiske's Becky Sharp ranks with Jefferson's Rip Van Winkle, Booth's Hamlet, Salvini's Othello, Fechter's Monte Cristo, Irving's Mathias, Cushman's Meg Merriles, and such great and perfect impersonations as we get at rare intervals on the stage.

Successes rarely follow one another, and her next ventures, in "The Unwelcome Mrs. Hatch" and "Miranda of the Balcony," may be dismissed as of little interest here.

Mrs. Fiske says that she is "hopelessly modern," yet for all that she went back nineteen hundred years for her next character, that of Mary of Magdala.

In the selection of her plays Mrs. Fiske cares very little whether the character to be represented by herself is the strongest in it, or if one or two of the male characters possess that quality; and so in "Mary of Magdala" Judas was really the strongest character in it, and as

played by Tyrone Power was a remarkable performance. I could imagine Edwin Forrest, with his robustness and his cathedral organ quality of voice in his earlier days, when listening to Power as Judas.

Some lines of Judas', in describing the impression the appearance of Christ made upon him when he first encountered his gaze, are burnt into my memory in tone, in quality, and in the graphic completeness of the meaning they conveyed.

In describing this meeting to Mary, he says: "His eyes compelled me, and his power subdued. His glory shriveled all my spirit up and changed me in an instant. What I was became as nothing underneath the spell that made me what I am."

Could anything be finer? and delivered in the rich, deep, melodious tones he possessed it became classic.

"Mary of Magdala" was first given in Milwaukee, October 23, 1902, at the Pabst Theater, and continued two seasons, during the second of which she produced "Hedda Gabler,"

and alternated the two in places, touring the Pacific Coast the second year. It was a "spotty" play, doing excellently well in places and very little in others, the latter result following a fear that it was sacrilegious, while it was really reverential. True, the Saviour was dangerously near being presented on the stage, for he was in the next room, or the next garden at intervals, but the line was rigidly drawn and never crossed. He was constantly talked about, creating a condition similar to the one often mentioned as "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out.

A clever feature about "Mary of Magdala" was the fact that Protestants of every shade of denomination, Catholic, or Jew, did not know whether to be pleased or offended, and as they could not fix upon any obnoxious line or allusion, they generally ended by letting it go by default, and Mrs. Fiske added many staunch friends from among the Episcopalian bishops, the Catholic priesthood, and the Jewish rabbis.

IV

"HEDDA GABLER"—"LEAH KLESCHNA"—"THE NEW YORK IDEA"—"ROSMERSHOLM"—"SALVATION NELL."

THE epoch-marking events in the career of Mrs. Fiske are numerous. If the dramatic temple of her own building were ornamented with the sculptures of her successful creations the salons and passages would comprise a Hall of Fame worthy of the greatest.

Mrs. Fiske never acts *herself*, startling as that statement may appear. The things she does on the stage are seldom characteristic of herself in private, although I have seen some of the most exquisite bits of acting done solely from the exuberance of her nature or the spontaneity of some momentary spur. In a one-night stand out West a stock company had given way to us for a day, and a young lady member of that company had just been stricken

with some fatal malady and had died in the local hospital. The young actor-husband, who was playing with another company elsewhere, had been called back, and as the two were practically penniless everybody in the theater "chipped in" for the expenses.

Mrs. Fiske requested the "bereaved" husband to come to her dressing room. He was young, and thought he was an actor, and the sad incident of his young wife's death did not overcome his gratification at being for the moment in the spotlight, therefore the "theatrical" manner he assumed gave Mrs. Fiske, with her keen perception, an opportunity that she could not resist. Her relation of the interview and its incidents, with imitations, was rich and an example of the spontaneity above mentioned.

Hedda Gabler was her second Ibsen character, Nora having been her earliest venture, and Hedda is one of her cleanest-cut impersonations. It is a Raphaęl-like figure, cut perfectly from the marble,—and with about as much blood in it. As a work of the highest art it is to be greatly admired, but, like the Laocoön, the

agony of it prevents it from becoming popular with the supersensitive. As a play it is a marvelous example of literary workmanship. Not a line could be spared from it, each having some bearing upon the others, and so cleverly is the dovetail construction accomplished that the rise to the tragic finish is so gradual that no step is visible. It is an incline, and not a ladder.

I cannot say authoritatively, but I *think* Mrs. Fiske will never produce "Ghosts",—the story is so repellent; but there is little doubt in my mind, however, that the character of the mother has attractions for her. I had the honor of witnessing, in her company, a performance of that play given by the German Players in Cincinnati, when her familiarity with the play enabled her to act as "Chorus" to me in explaining much I did not understand.

The season of 1904-5 was the high-water mark of the Theatrical Syndicate,—more of which hereafter,—and it was during that season that she remained in New York and, together with Mr. Fiske, organized the Manhattan Company, on December 12, 1904, present-

ing "Leah Kleschna," with a cast of remarkable excellence.

Mrs. Fiske looks upon Leah as not much better than a "walking lady," but in spite of that she pitted herself against four men who individually and collectively made remarkable hits.

John Mason played Paul Sylvaine; George Arliss, Raoul; Charles Cartright, Kleschna; and William B. Mack, Schram; each of whom was with her for his first season, with the single exception of Mr. Mack.

Mrs. Fiske never denies her support any legitimate opportunity to develop and to make everything possible out of their parts—anything that does not throw the symmetry of the whole out of poise.

These four men gave performances that, taken in addition to that of Mrs. Fiske, made "Leah Kleschna" a great success; and as the manuscript had been refused by numerous managers before it reached the Fiskes its success came as a surprise to many. It is the *possibilities* of a play that strikes Mrs. Fiske,

and those are to the play as a whole what the internal organs of the human body are to the skillful surgeon with an x-ray. What can be made of characters when interpreted by men and women of superior ability aided and directed by the mind of a genius for development!

"Leah Kleschna" finished out the New York season, and Mrs. Fiske then made a short tour of the Pacific Coast in the late spring and summer, continuing with the same play all of the following season of 1905-6.

Its scene of most intense interest was probably that of the safe robbery, during a portion of which the stage was so dark that the only part of Mrs. Fiske that was visible to the audience was her left hand in the focused light of a dark lantern as she forced the safe door.

The last act was weak, absolutely puerile, but presented a very attractive and original setting —that of a lettuce field done in long lines of perspective, giving a beautifully picturesque effect that never failed of recognition.

It was this scene that caused many of her

less discriminating and newer patrons to refer ever after to having seen her in "The Cabbage Patch," confusing the play with one referring additionally to a party by the name of Mrs. Wiggs.

This I have had positively to deny many times, and only the other day a person boasted proudly to me of having seen Mrs. Fisk in "'Way Down East."

Langdon Mitchell provided two of Mrs. Fiske's biggest successes, "Becky Sharp" and "The New York Idea," the latter following "Leah Kleschna," and first produced in Milwaukee at the Shubert Theater on Tuesday, October 9, 1906, going thence to Chicago for two weeks, to enormous business, where it could have remained indefinitely, so great was the demand.

In this cast were John Mason, George Arliss, Charles Harbury, Dudley Clinton, and Dorothy Dorr, the latter being soon superseded by Marian Lea, the wife of the author, and a former actress of rare ability.

The gentlemen all made hits, as also did

Miss Lea when she came to the part. As in "Divorçons" and "Becky Sharp," Mrs. Fiske's pre-eminent qualities as an exponent of refined comedy had full scope, and the scenes between herself and Mr. Mason have probably never been surpassed, living in the memory of all those who were fortunate enough to witness them as the highest attainment in light comedy acting—exquisite in their delicate touch, never overdrawn, but natural, graceful, irresistible. Mason's "divorced" husband, Arliss' English visitor, Harbury's Judge Phillimore, and Clinton's Clergyman, were all remarkably perfect creations.

"Dolce," a one act play by John Luther Long, was also produced in 1906.

In the fall and early winter of 1907 Mrs. Fiske made her first tour of the South since she had made any "reincarnation" successes. The South had never seen "Tess" or "Leah Kleschna," and with an excellent support the tour was made. It began at Norfolk, Va., and after swinging around the circle terminated, December 5, in Marietta, Ohio. Its success

was not what was anticipated. In New Orleans, the birthplace of Mrs. Fiske—a city she had not visited in many years,—the business was disappointing, to say the least. A strange circumstance of this tour was the fact that after the booking had been made in a Shubert house the control had come into that of the Syndicate, with no antagonistic result, however; in fact, we enjoyed the most pleasant associations with Mr. Campbell, the Syndicate representative there, and his whole force of employees.

After the rich comedy of "The New York Idea" came gloom; the leap from exquisite humor, gayety, and laughter to the depths that always accompanies melancholy—in this case ending with double suicide. Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" was first presented by Mrs. Fiske at the Hyperion Theater, New Haven, at a matinee, and on Christmas Day, 1907.

It would have been about as consistent to have produced the Passion Play at the Jardin Mabille or the Moulin Rouge on Bastille Day in Paris. My! oh, my!

Well, it gave a good dress rehearsal—and

the students were all away. New York had it for four weeks at the Lyric Theater, beginning December 30, and all the principal cities from Boston to San Francisco, until 199 consecutive performances had been given—a record-breaking feat for an Ibsen play.

To digress. When my career began, at the old Boston Museum, the classic drama was Boston's boast, and Boston's reputation for patronage was marked by the cultured and literary quality of the plays presented. For more than a generation, now, the thing has been reversed, and my study of the more modern requirements of the play-going public of Boston impels me, a Bostonian myself, to put up the warning sign, to be read by those intending to present the higher educational or intellectual drama in Boston as a business venture. Have cash or credit enough with you to get to Chicago, where to this day the worthiest receives its highest recompense, as it was with "Rosmersholm." You may not like the play, but its merits are incontestable.

Again a remarkably fine cast interpreted her

production,—Bruce McRae, George Arliss, Fuller Mellish, and Albert Bruning. A quartette of male impersonations that has frequently been found in her history.

If you are familiar with "Rosmersholm," imagine its being presented in Kokomo, Ind., Yankton, S. D., North Platte, Neb., Raton, N. M., Bisbee, Ariz., and Calgary, Alberta, not to forget El Paso, Texas, where one of the largest gatherings of the season assembled.

Another remarkable change in the character of Mrs. Fiske's productions occurred when she laid aside "Rosmersholm," which probably no other living actress could have continued consecutively so long, and presented Edward Sheldon's "Salvation Nell." If "Rosmersholm" required courage, so indeed did "Salvation Nell," and if there is a line to be drawn between courage and daring, then daring would be the better word for the latter play. Faith might be coupled with courage and will with daring. "Rosmersholm" could not be tabooed, but "Salvation Nell,"—well, nothing but the trial of it could demonstrate its reception.

"SALVATION NELL."

Facing Page 54.

Other managers had ridiculed the idea of even its possibility outside of a third-class melodramatic establishment, and turned it down hard. Mrs. Fiske read the young Harvard student's enthusiastic effort, and sprang at it like a trout to a fly. The *possibilities* again. Nell was not a great part,—far from it,—but the newness of its subject, its treatment, and the ensemble of its heterogeneous characters struck her as unique, and late in 1908 she startled New York with an idealized production of a very realistic, startlingly realistic, drama of the slums—and nothing else. There was not a lady or a gentleman in it, or what is generally understood by those terms. Barrooms, bums, tramps, females of no virtue, drunken rows, murder, street fights, and hurdy-gurdies predominated, and yet Mrs. Fiske so lifted this mélange and riot of vice and crime that it became almost classic. The underlying lesson of it all was so strong it was Niagara-like in its power. To every thinking, broad, receptive mind it went straight as an arrow.

"Salvation Nell" was a highly profitable

venture, but whether or not advisable is an open question in the minds of some. It toured the entire country the remainder of that season and the next, up to February 19, 1910, when it was withdrawn at Brooklyn.

It was while en route from Butte, Montana, to Winnipeg, July 25, 1909, that all our scenery was destroyed by fire. The car containing the scenery had taken fire from sparks from the engine while traversing the Bad Lands, and was a total loss. The other cars, containing the wardrobe, properties, and personal effects, escaped, although they were badly burned outside. This necessitated either canceling Winnipeg, Duluth, and Minneapolis, or playing those dates with a faked set of scenery. The managers in these cities urged our coming, in answer to wiring, which we did, to very excellent results. In Winnipeg two days later we used an assemblage of "front streets," "medieval palaces," "rocky passes," and "Italian gardens," with a few signs like, "Feinheimer's Delicatessen," "O'Grady's Thirst Parlors," "Isaac Bernstein's Pawn Shop,"

"Antonio Ricardi's Fruit Cellar," and similar information, attached to the Doges' Palace or the Cathedral at Rheims. And yet the play went just as well apparently. The audience was generously forbearing, and exceedingly kind.

Duluth did a little better, having had a few days more time; but with a week's interim, and by dispatching our stage manager and master carpenter ahead to Minneapolis, we had an entire new production painted for the latter place. Fact, I assure you. It was a stock company house, and they were accustomed to haste. The business was excellent in each of these places.

The usual quartette was absent from this play, and Holbrook Blinn had the male interest entirely to himself, and held it by a wonderfully perfect performance, entirely in harmony with Mrs. Fiske's ideals and methods. Hope Latham also made a great success with a dangerously "near" character. Charlotte Thompson the playwright, who appeared under the name of Mary Madison, was also very suc-

cessful as Hallelujah Maggie. The other characters were all bits, in one of which Gilda Varesi gave a bit of realism of the lower world worthy of a Duse.

These comprise Mrs. Fiske's productions up to the time of my retirement, but she has made several other productions since, notably Ibsen's "Pillars of Society," "Hannele," "Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh," the short-lived "The New Marriage," and "Lady Patricia."

Chronologically, historically and biographically, such as it is, I am now done; but with your kind permission, as the magicians say when they want your hat or watch, I will continue on specialized features, such as refer to Syndicate opposition, incidents and anecdotes of travel, Mrs. Fiske's methods, manner, temperament, interest in humane societies, child labor legislation, and a general blanket policy covering all the years I was closely associated with her business interests.

V

THE THEATRICAL SYNDICATE

THERE are few people who have not heard of the Theatrical Syndicate, and probably a far less number among theater-goers who care two straws about it. It was organized about the time Mrs. Fiske returned to the stage, and was composed of six men, who owned or controlled a sufficient number of theaters, stars, productions, and booking privileges to warrant them in believing that if they could acquire a few more interests of these varied classifications they might be able to create a practical monopoly of all theatrical enterprises.

If they held by ownership, lease, or contract to book exclusively the principal theaters of the United States, the stars and producing managers would be obliged to come to them for their time, which meant a booking fee from the touring managers and the same from

the theaters booked, as well as their profits from those they leased or owned.

Should the touring manager decline this proposition, he would be obliged to play his attractions in second-class houses, with a loss in prestige and perhaps pocket.

To reverse this plan, if the Syndicate could corral the principal stars and productions, the theaters not under their control would be without attractions much of the time, or must fill in the gaps with inferior ones. Mr. Jefferson, who termed the scheme as one inimical to the best interests of the theater, was one of the first to surrender. Nat. Goodwin, Francis Wilson, and Richard Mansfield, who each had denounced the Syndicate in good set terms, fell into the outstretched net one by one; but Mrs. Fiske steadfastly held aloof.

The scheme was certainly a bold one, and in line with the methods of the big trusts in oil, steel, coal, tobacco, sugar, etc.

Attempts were made to break down the organization by applying the anti-trust laws and decisions to its operation, but in every minor

as well as important case against the theater the decison was persistently adhered to,—that a theater is a "private" enterprise; it could not be classed as a necessity or that the establishment of rules or prices was in restraint of trade. No one was obliged to go to the theater, and no suffering was entailed upon him by the raising of prices and his consequent absence from it.

No, the theater was private property, and, as such, the manager could do what he pleased with it, so long as his offerings did not corrupt the morals of the community or become a nuisance in any way. Hence opposition was useless on these lines.

In Boston and in Chicago there was always a first-class theater for Mrs. Fiske,—the Tremont Theater, or the Grand Opera House, in the latter of which all of Mrs. Fiske's engagements in Chicago have been played.

At first there was little difficulty for her to obtain bookings in first-class houses, but gradually, as season after season came and went, the screws were turned a little tighter, and she had at length to resort to the second-class or

melodramatic houses, always, however, raising the prices to her level, be it remembered.

It was during nearly all of the time of her struggle for independence that my connection with her interests was continued.

Mr. Fiske put up a hard and bitter fight through the columns of the *Dramatic Mirror*, which he owned, and through other journals that from time to time allied themselves with him.

Eventually David Belasco became an independent, and Henrietta Crosman, through her husband Maurice Campbell, and also James K. Hackett, were for a time under the Syndicate ban.

Along in December, 1892, when the sole Independents were Mrs. Fiske, Miss Crosman, and Mr. Hackett, we were presenting "Mary of Magdala" at the Manhattan Theater, and the bookings outside of New York were few and far between for the independents. Mrs. Fiske, with her great name and prestige, succeeded in filling her time, but the others found it pretty "hard sledding" and far more difficult to do

so. Hence on December 18 I was requested to go to Pittsburg to see if it were possible to get a theater opened to the Independents. No clue was given me to work upon, excepting by the process of elimination, which left two possibilities.

My first visit was to Mr. Williams at the Duquesne, to whom I gradually unfolded my desires. Mr. Williams was very polite and equally emphatic, that he knew what he could do with vaudeville, but he could not answer for results with first-class stars.

After presenting my entire stock of arguments, he finally informed me that he could not do this even if he would, as there was an agreement existing with the Bijou management —he not to present drama, while on the other hand they were not to give vaudeville during the continuance of that agreement.

My next call was upon Mr. Gulick at the Bijou, and after some considerable effort I succeeded in convincing himself and his partner, Mr. McNulty, that their interests lay in high-priced dramatic stars at the Duquesne, rather

than low-priced vaudeville, and I gained their consent to an annulment of the agreement with Mr. Williams, so far as our bookings were concerned, provided Mr. Williams wished to do so.

Back to Mr. Williams with my story, but he was far from acquiescent. Again I opened my box of tricks, and as eloquently as possible I plead my clients' case. To make a long story brief, I was to write out the form of option I desired and bring it to him that evening, and he would mull on it over Sunday and let me know his decision Monday morning.

This was on Saturday afternoon, December 20, 1902. That evening I returned with my option carefuly written out and passed it over to Mr. Williams. He deliberately adjusted his glasses, and I sat back while he carefully and slowly read the paper to the end. I then expected some comment from him; but not a word did he utter, and when he had finished he laid the paper down upon his desk and fumbled among his papers for something which proved eventually to be his pen, which, when found,

he unconcernedly utilized to sign the paper. He then tossed it over to me, with the simple remark. "There, I suppose that is what you want." And it was.

I had been informed that the opening of theaters in Cleveland and Detroit to the Independents depended upon the acquisition of one in Pittsburg, and it may easily be inferred what my feelings were while en route back to New York with the document in my pocket that really did open all three cities.

One other incident that was of importance to us occurred a little later. We opened on Christmas Day in a large city of the Atlantic Slope, and because of its being Christmas, and of course a holiday, I did not call upon the editor-in-chief of the principal evening paper, who was a personal friend, as I should have done on any other day of the week.

This particular daily owned one of the principal theaters that was under Syndicate control, and quite naturally an inferior attraction, appearing there against us, received a flattering notice while Mrs. Fiske, her play, and company

came in for the crumbs that fell from the Syndicate table.

During Tuesday I called to pay my respects to the aged editor-in-chief, and in the course of the conversation he inquired if the paper had used us all right. I replied that I was very sorry to say that it had not.

Astonished and grieved at this announcement, for he gave little personal attention to this department himself, he wished to know why. I explained that the opinions expressed by his critic were as much out of harmony with the universal verdict as they would have been had he characterized the Savior on the cross as a thief and the two thieves as the martyred Sons of God.

Little more was said on the subject, other than that he was extremely sorry, and that he wished I had called the day before. However, the climax came later.

That evening a special writer was dispatched to the theater where we were, and on the following day a very delightful interview appeared with a portrait—the paper not using

them as a rule. On the following Sunday a column article appeared, very gratifying and just in every respect, *over the signature* of the writer of Tuesday's unfavorable review.

These are but two illustrations of the constant vigilance and activity that prevailed during the long struggle for independence.

The greatest blow the Independents received was in the agreement between the Syndicate and Stair & Havlin that practically closed the second-class houses to first-class stars. Mrs. Fiske came nearer being bottled up, corked in, and wired down then than at any other period, but Houdini-like, it was impossible to keep her entirely chained. She was now forced to seek an outlet, like pent-up steam, and vaudeville houses, burlesque houses, and stock company houses gave way for a week or a night to her; halls and rinks were utilized; upstairs and downstairs stages; clubhouses with stages and auditoriums were offered to her; while such vast amusement places as the Auditoriums in St. Paul and Los Angeles, not controlled by the Syndicate, were appropriated.

We have played great rinks in the British Northwest so vast that huge sailcloths were hung across the center of the building to shut off the immensity of space, and act as a sounding board.

We played "Rosmersholm," with two diminutive interiors and a cast of seven people, on that enormous stage of the St. Paul Auditorium, a stage so immense as to enable all the transfer wagons, and then some, to be driven upon the stage back of the set scenes, that looked like little bird houses, so great was the vacant space about them.

The Pacific Coast gave us much trouble for a long time, but we invariably found some opening somewhere. In Los Angeles it was first the Grand Opera House, then the Burbank, next the Belasco,—both the latter stock houses,—and lastly the Auditorium. The last named was on a rental, but the week proved one of the biggest ever played to by Mrs. Fiske.

It was during this struggle that I was dispatched to Joseph Jefferson's private car, to sound him on the subject of Independence; but

I must say that the interview resulted in no satisfaction to the Independents.

The rise of the Shuberts was of great value to Mrs. Fiske, and on the other hand she of inestimable value to them, and it is a question if they would have been able to get on their feet if it had not been for her bookings and her magic name associated with them.

It was a mutual advantage, however, and had circumstances been indefinitely favorable to the coalition it might still be to the advantage of both, for about the time the fight was called off against Mrs. Fiske and Mr. Belasco the Shuberts were becoming exceedingly strong and have become much stronger since.

Even as early as 1909, in January, evidence for a desire for amity began to get about and reach us from sources intimately connected with the Syndicate, but nothing materialized that could be considered official; still there were whisperings which finally developed into open declarations that if Mrs. Fiske or Mr. Belasco wished to play in any Syndicate house, one or all of them, they would be welcomed,

and no questions asked. It was while we were in Cincinnati, on April 29, that the information came to Mrs. Fiske by wire and newspaper announcement, and we were at once besieged by interviewers for any statement Mrs. Fiske might choose to make.

It might have been expected of Washington, that he would have something to say after seven years' struggling for independence. It might also have been expected of Lincoln, after the four years' war that ended in his triumph; but no one, especially gentle-minded people, wish to exhibit a spirit of triumph over those whom they have vanquished.

The Fiske's contention had been for the right to book, without dictation, with the managers of theaters direct or their representatives, without any compulsion to play certain other cities; and to play one theater or another according as the terms and other conditions suited the contracting parties themselves.

When this restraint was removed, Mrs. Fiske had no further visible contention, for the independence she had fought for had been at-

tained, and the published statement, agreed to by Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger, Mr. Fiske and Mr. Belasco, stated that they would, "hereafter, whenever mutually agreeable, play attractions in each other's theaters"; and furthermore, the announcement stated, "nothing was discussed that would or could interfere with the fulfillment of any existing arrangements or contracts by any of the parties concerned. No writing of any kind was prepared, except the foregoing statement."

The only comment that Mrs. Fiske would make was a very brief statement of fact, that was given out to each paper alike, to the effect that the New York announcement was true; but that she had not relinquished her independent attitude in any respect.

This information was at first given over her signature, but immediately after delivering them Mrs. Fiske dispatched a hastily penciled note to me, to the effect that perhaps there had been an understanding between the parties concerned that no one should give out a statement, and that therefore she would be grateful if

the papers would use the matter, not as a personal statement from her, but as a simple statement of fact.

The war was ended, but the winner of a long struggle showed no more evidence of it than if it had been an every-day occurrence. A woman of more perfect control over her emotions I cannot imagine. The subject was scarcely even discussed between us.

The causes that led up to the truce, armistice, protocol, or capitulation to the Fiske contention I will not discuss. I will merely state a fact, and that is, that the Shubert or Independent interest had gotten to be a powerful one, and a little later it received a perfect landslide of acquisitions in the West, and especially on the Pacific Coast, where hitherto they had been exceedingly weak. This much is history and not personal opinion.

VI

ON TOUR

MRS. FISKE'S receipts on the road were generally large, and the companies she had in her support were invariably expensive, with elaborate equipment, two of the largest baggage cars being usually required, unless a small production of the "Rosmersholm" type was being presented.

When a series of one-night stands was being played—and she has a perfectly frantic fondness for them,—it was our custom to charter a Pullman, usually a buffet, or a broiler, as she lived in the car instead of in hotels. The subject of a private car for touring was at various times taken up, but it never appeared to find much favor with Mrs. Fiske, as it did with Mansfield, Jefferson, and Mrs. Langtry, each of whom had his car shunted to as quiet and retired a location as possible, and kept on the rails.

Mrs. Langtry had her drawing-room, her reception room, bath, kitchen, several state-rooms, and her own attendants. Mr. Jefferson had his studio as well, and Mr. Mansfield all the luxuries of his home; but as I have said, this never, for some mysterious reason, appealed to Mrs. Fiske.

Her special or "chartered" car, however, she most urgently requested, through her representatives, to have placed "*not* at the end of the train." The "rear-end collision" had mortal terrors for her. Neither did she want it near the engine. The difficulties of both these problems are plainly evident to any railroad man. If the car is forward of other cars it becomes a thoroughfare for all who pass back and forth on the train, which means conductor, brakemen, train boy, and the restless and curious passenger. Furthermore, when forward, cutting out at its destination requires much more time and shunting, than when on the rear.

The same nervous fear applied to non-fireproof hotels, in any of which Mrs. Fiske will

not go above the second story. An instance of this occurs annually in one far Western city —I will not say which, or the name of the hotel, for Mrs. Fiske (and Minnie Maddern) has found the utmost evidences of hospitality there for many years, and her personal regard and appreciation of the landlord's interest is all that has held her patronage. This hotel has been superseded by other and more modern fireproof structures, and has been relegated to the second-class, yet she has been loath to desert her old friend.

On our last visit there she requested me to examine its fire escapes and its general facilities as affording exit to the street in case of fire. Upon her arrival Mr. Blank had had the table in her room set with the best silver and china the house afforded,—all of which was really excellent—and as I had found the fire escape practicable and the means of egress satisfactory, these facts, together with her spirit of loyalty, caused Mrs. Fiske to remain again at this hostelry.

The name of the hotel, however, is one that

is susceptible to the genus pun, and on this name Mrs. Fiske perpetrated the only pun I think she ever made,—in fact, she said it was, for she dislikes punning above all things. I am afraid even Tom Hood would have found little favor with her, had they been contemporaries. No such punning as "His death which happened in his berth," or "They went and told the sexton, and the sexton tolled the bell," would pass muster with her.

One day she remarked to me, in reference to a non-fireproof hotel: "If I were to be burned in a hotel, Mr. Fiske would never forgive me."

In touring the Middle West she was on familiar ground, but the exigencies of booking required her often to play in cities of the far West that were unusual stopping-places for stars of her magnitude. Take Raton, N. M., for instance, where the passages to the right and left of the auditorium were on the bare gravel walk. In Globe, Arizona, a mining town, the entire population, it seemed, came to the station to witness her arrival. The theater in the heart of the canyon was small, and of

eccentric shape. We were pleased, however, to find an excellent hotel.

Bisbee, Arizona, was another such town. An untraveled Easterner would be astonished to find such fashionable, refined, and educated people in the audiences of these remote places. Let me pay due tribute right here to these Western cities, for they possess just as fine people and of equally excellent a class as any of our older Eastern ones. I have seen fully as fashionable audiences, I mean fully up to date, in Salt Lake City as I ever have in New York City.

Up in the Canadian Northwest Mrs. Fiske was the first star of any magnitude to play those places—Calgary, Edmondton, Regina, and Brandon. We were late in arriving at Edmondton, the farthest north of any city with through railroad connection in America; this was in 1907, and the curtain did not rise until nearly eleven o'clock, and yet it was scarcely dark, it being early in July.

The "theater" was the "Thistle Rink" and had refreshment counters along the side. Our

properties were spread upon the lawn at the side, and some of the company dressed in a private house adjacent. When we returned to our car across the river, about 2 A. M., it was sufficiently light to read a newspaper.

In Regina, Saskatchewan, we were late again in arriving, and were astonished to find the inhabitants celebrating the *Fourth of July*, with fireworks. Here we played without our scenery, one little local "interior" being made to serve. This was with "The New York Idea."

Mrs. Fiske appears never to weary of travel, and while she objects to starts ranging from five to ten o'clock A. M., an earlier or later leaving hour does not disturb her; in fact, she says she rarely falls asleep until near morning, and her sleep thus comes practically all in the forenoon.

We had a prohibition against ringing the berth bells before 10 A. M., by the company, and also against any kind of alarm clock. A custom of Mrs. Fiske was to provide the working staff with their sleepers, and on one oc-

casion I received a penciled note from her to the effect that someone, presumably one of the staff, had an alarm clock set for an early hour, as they frequently had to arise earlier than the company,—and she supposed it had awakened everybody as it had her. She considered it an inexcusable thing, as it probably was, and would feel grateful if I would discover who it was, and kindly forbid a repetition.

Notes upon every imaginable subject and upon every imaginable phase of every imaginable subject, which would have stretched from Eastport to San Diego had I kept them all, reached me at some time or another, always couched in polite and gentle terms. Every little detail of the business was covered by these notes, whose admonitions I always cheerfully and gladly observed, for a more courteous and appreciative woman does not exist.

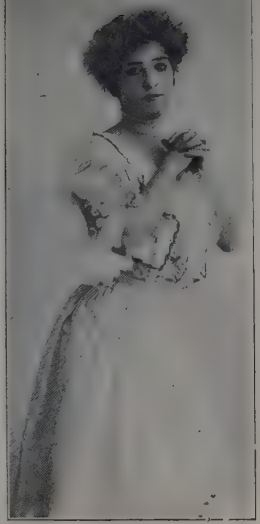
Very rarely Mrs. Fiske went to the dining car on the train, her dislike for making herself conspicuous being very marked, and she scarcely ever visited the body of the car from the drawing room. This modesty was exemplified in

her fondness for veils, as she always wore at least one, and more generally two; perhaps on occasions three, so opaque appeared the covering as noted from the outside. Her unceasing employment of time when on tour is in study pursued on the train and in her hotel. It is a never-ending labor, and one that evidently delights her. The preparation for things to come—perhaps a year or even far more than that ahead—is always on her mind.

Everywhere is met he who has written the greatest play of the time, and if Mrs. Fiske would only read it, she could not fail to agree with the author. To all these requests she has but one answer,—send the play to Mr. Fiske and it will be read. What else could she do? It is impossible to read the plays that are submitted, and yet every star wants plays, therefore every play submitted gets a reading, or at least enough to establish its quality, by a professional play reader employed by every manager for that purpose.

One thing that causes Mrs. Fiske much annoyance is sending scripts to her by regis-

Leah Kleschna



Divorcons

Little Italy

MRS. FISKE IN VARIOUS CHARACTERS.

Facing Page 80.

tered mail while on tour, for in some instances mail clerks and even postmasters insist upon her personal appearance at the post office to claim them, and I have been refused a delivery at an office, armed with her signed order, on the excuse that neither myself nor her signature was known to them. My instruction in such cases was to tear up the notice and leave the parcel to be returned to the sender.

Generally, however, the reverse of this was the case, I am pleased to say.

In her earlier tours the seasons were of the average length, but for some years now they have been extended far into June, then July, and finally into August, culminating in a continuous season, recently of sixty weeks. Unless one has a constitution of iron and takes wonderfully good care of one's self, no one could stand this sort of thing; it sooner or later means a breakdown.

During all my time with Mrs. Fiske she never lost a single night from illness, or from late arrival; no matter what the time or condition we *always* gave the performance. This

is quite a remarkable fact, for fires, floods, and accidents have detained and delayed us many times, but never to force us to abandon a performance. She has often appeared in "Gardens," in the middle West, notably Elitch's in Denver, Fairview Park, Dayton, and Olentangy Park, Columbus, Ohio, and Olympia Park, Chattanooga, Tenn., but never in a tent.

VII

MRS. FISKE'S INTEREST IN DUMB ANIMALS

VERY commonly those who have the time and the means to indulge their fancies have some special side interest, hobby, fad, or line of charity work, as one collects postage stamps, coins, china, books, pictures, or autographs, while another builds libraries, endows universities or hospitals, establishes scholarships, or homes for the aged, all of which are interesting and generally of value.

Mrs. Fiske is one of those who have an object in life, probably as dear to her, and perhaps nearer, than her profession; and that is the humane work of alleviating the pain and suffering of dumb animals. I understand that Henry Bergh rather disliked dogs, personally, and had no special fondness for horses, and I think Mrs. Fiske resembles him in that respect, in a modified degree, however. I could not

say that she dislikes dogs, but she was not fond of them to the extent of fondling or making constant companions of them, to accompany her everywhere on her travels. She did, however, at one time carry a French poodle on her tours, one that possessed a large degree of intelligence.

While playing at the Academy of Music, New York, she directed her maid to take Fifi to the dog barber to have a hair cut and to be generally trimmed up, joining her later at rehearsal. During one of Mrs. Fiske's scenes the poodle entered the theater and calmly and unconcernedly crossed the stage, keeping at a respectful distance from her, however, only condescending to notice her mistress with a side glance.

This was so contrary to her customary dashing and bounding approach, that Mrs. Fiske stopped the rehearsal and called to Fifi to come to her, but not for Fifi; she merely glanced and continued her dignified and stately promenade across the stage. She had been trimmed and looked fine, with her big door knobs on each

hip and the doughnuts around each leg at the first and second story. Persistently and with authority Mrs. Fiske ordered the queenly Fifi to approach. Not for Hecuba—no approach, only a pause. Mohammed must go to the mountain, and Mrs. Fiske did the approaching. Did Fifi grin, or what did the slight gleam of white teeth portend? It was merely the flash of lightning, for the thunder came soon after in a low growl of defiance. Never had such a thing happened before.

This impromptu play was good, with Mrs. Fiske at her best, and the audience of actors stood by immensely interested. With tragic emphasis Mrs. Fiske stamped her foot and, pointing in the direction of her dressing room, ordered the black woolly beast to begone and quit her sight, let the dressing room hide her, and a few things like that, and added something about Fifi's bones being marrowless, her blood cold, and the absence of speculation in her eyes which she did glare with.

What kind of a canine tragedy would have resulted, I cannot say, but just then Mr. Gil-

more, who had appeared and heard enough to enlighten him on the situation, loosened up his very grim smile and remarked: "That ain't any Fifi, that's my dog Genie," and just at this moment, enter L. 2. E., Maid and Fifi, who does the expected bounding and barking act. Laughter—quick curtain.

There never was a case of lame or scurvy dog that fell under Mrs. Fiske's notice that did not get instant relief. A mangy and ownerless mongrel cur on the street never failed to find a friend in her. If she were in a carriage, no conveyance was too good for Towser or Tige. Towser or Tige might never have had a bath during all of his unhappy dog days, and his visible condition nauseating and repellent, but into the carriage went the friend of man, and the coachman was directed to steer for the nearest veterinarian, who was forthwith subsidized to make a perfectly good dog out of a very much frazzled one, and send the bill to Mrs. Fiske.

All over this glorious country dogs were being repaired, boarded, and rebuilt as good as

new, until they were even beyond the convalescent stage, when masters were adopted for them, and "the dog that Mrs. Fiske saved" lived his allotted span and expired loved, honored, and respected, so mote it be.

With horses, too, it was just the same. I believe if she were on the way to a matinee, with the house all sold out, and the S. R. O. sign cumbering the sidewalk, and an abused and otherwise pitiful case of horse attracted her attention,—and it *would*,—she would sacrifice that matinee before she would the horse. No horse or dog ever offered up a prayer in vain when Mrs. Fiske was within hearing.

I used to think dogs with broken legs or with tin cans or firecrackers tied to their tails, and spavined, spring-halted, or docked horses, called her up on the telephone to tell her of their woes, so incessantly was she laboring in their cause.

I think it was in Findlay, Ohio, she one day espied one of her canine charges suffering in silence with a broken leg, or what appeared to be such on examination, and naturally there

was only one thing to be done. She alighted, took the patient little sufferer in her arms and into her carriage, at the same time directing the driver to hie him forthwith and with all speed within the law to a veterinarian whom he knew,—and from whom he could probably get a percentage. They went, and the dog was splinted, bandaged, and happy with a good feed and a warm rug. Exit Lady Bountiful.

Early that evening strange inquiries, by strange persons of the cub reporter type, began to force themselves upon me at the front of the house. Did Mrs. Fiske own a dog? Was there a dog at her car? What kind of a dog had she? Where was the dog then? What sort of a looking person was Mrs. Fiske when unacting? Was she out driving this afternoon? What kind of a carriage did she have? Did she go out Main Street? Did she take a dog with her when she left the car? Did she have a dog with her when she returned? Had she a dog now in her dressing room?—and a lot of these cross-examination, rebuttal and sur-rebuttal interrogatories.

No, she didn't, she wasn't, she hadn't, she did, she would, she was, yes, no, I don't know, and various monosyllabic replies I returned, utterly unconscious of the drift of it all, only in a general way knowing that some phase of her dog-guardianship had manifested itself in Findlay, Ohio.

Finally the manager spoke, and told me that Mrs. Fiske, unknown as such to a certain barkeeper of the town, had "pinched" his bow-wow and had it concealed among her effects, with felonious intent to kidnap and convey out of the State his fourteen-cent mongrel pup, him of the broken leg; and, furthermore, a local Dogberry (no pun intended) had been appealed to, and a warrant had been issued to search, and if said kaiser were found concealed about her person to "reprehend" the same "Mrs. Friske" and all who aided and abetted her in the crime.

The coachman had been traced by a local Sherlock Holmes, and when the nature of the legal proceedings was broached to Mrs. Fiske, and the imminence of her incarceration in a

Findlay, Ohio, dungeon cell for kidnapery was explained, the whole story was given out, when the barkeep went on his knees for pardon, and thanksgiving for helping the "purp"; —s'elp me!

The local paper the next morning had one of the best humorous articles on the subject I have read in many a long day. It was George Ade at his best.

I think Mrs. Fiske's arm has reached to all parts of the world in answer to the mute appeal of horses, mules, burros, swine, sheep, dogs, cats, and all the fur bearing animals that are trapped or killed. Mexico and Spain have received much of her attention and her coin, in the hope to either exterminate bullfighting altogether or to lessen its horrors so far as the torture of the horse in connection with it is concerned.

Why cannot the appeal of all the civilized world, so far as the horse is connected with this barbarous sport, be heard? If bullfighting must even continue, the skill of the matador is none the less, or his labor less dangerous, by

omitting the mounted picador. Much effort has been expended in this direction, and perhaps some effect produced by it; the seed is being sown, and should it lay in the ground a decade, or two, or three, it must eventually produce its harvest.

The trapping of fur-bearing animals, causing pain and suffering to the poor creatures, has also been fought by her. The providing of shelter, water, and food for cattle on the Western ranches during periods of storm and cold, and their care and attention while in transit,—feeding, and watering,—and restrictions against over-crowding, have been the subject of Mrs. Fiske's attention. In fact, every phase of protection for the brute creation has never failed to receive her aid.

On one occasion she was playing in El Paso, and had prepared in advance circulars denunciatory of bullfighting, which she took across the river to Juarez and herself distributed broadcast in the open streets, the market-place, and other public places.

If it were not for the Americans in El Paso

bullfighting would probably cease in Ciudad Juarez; but so long as the Americans cross the river and visit the Plaza des Toros it will continue to thrive.

There are humane societies in Mexico laboring for reform, and to these and possibly hundreds of others all over the world Mrs. Fiske has contributed, and is enrolled as an honorary member.

At one time a large box containing copies of the book "Black Beauty" was carried along with us, and no transfer man, cabman, expressman, or other driver of horses came within her reach that did not receive a copy as a gift.

I have never observed that Mrs. Fiske is a vegetarian, and I suppose she does not carry her humane ideas to the extent of prohibiting the slaughter, by as painless and humane methods as possible, of certain creatures for food purposes. The ardent vegetarian cannot understand that attitude, but it is as sane an attitude as that of the temperance advocate who is not an extremest, and who believes in the

manufacture and use of liquor under proper circumstances.

The extremist, who is always an enthusiast, and invariably narrow, would, if he liked not tea, prohibit its use by others if he had the power.

VIII

BANISHMENT OF NOISE—BABIES—PEANUTS—THE ADVERTISING CURTAIN HORROR—POSTERS

THE perfection of Mrs. Fiske's productions and performances is largely due to her attention to detail, to trifles, and the absolute quiet that must prevail both behind and in front of the curtain.

In front is the acting manager, with full authority over every person connected with the organization, either with it or ahead, and he is alone responsible to his star or the owner or director in New York, as the case may be.

Behind the curtain the stage manager has full power, so far as his department is concerned. He must protect his star from every sound that would distract or divert her attention, and hence on arrival at the theater he must investigate the sources of possible noise. The prevention of cracking or hammering in the steam pipes, as well as the avoidance of

hissing or escaping steam at the valves must have his attention. Strict admonition as to the unnecessary moving about of attaches, the abolition of heavy heels or squeaking soles; the banishment from the stage during an act of those not concerned in its operation; peremptory prohibition of conversation, even in whispers; means to prevent spot or other lights from sputtering; orders to lay carpets about the vacant stage to ensure quiet, and a lot of minor things that all together go towards making a perfect performance—these are also matters for his care.

In the front of the house there are fully as many more details of the same general tenor. Trying lobby doors to see if they squeak or bang; the same directions regarding steam radiators and pipes as at back stage, the banishment of peanuts in the shell, or other refreshments sold in crackly sacks, and, the most important one of all, the absolute refusal to admit *at all* little children, say under seven years of age, are a few of the injunctions laid at his door.

The amount of abuse I have recived from parents for this latter prohibition would leave Ben Butler, Andrew Johnson, Jefferson Davis, and Dr. Cook in the infant class. Because of my exclusion of a little tot of three or four the irate mama, after exhausting every argument and line of abuse, returned a minute later, shook her finger at me and shouted, "And *you* are a d—d fool!"

I don't know, but everyone who wishes to take a small and uncomprehending child to a performance which it could not possibly understand appears to lose sight of the fact that it is necessary to protect a thousand patrons rather than to gratify one or two parents.

An otherwise good-natured German and his wife—I think it was in Battle Creek,—brought a little child to the theater, whereupon the doorkeeper refused them admittance. Local doorkeepers are generally very loath to enforce regulations of visiting managers against their townspeople, and if the company manager is not on the spot they will allow children to be smuggled in, generally with disastrous results

and the exposure of their disobedience. In this case, however, I was close at hand, and attempted to explain the situation as politely as possible; but the German was furious, and turning towards me said, "You keep you nose out." Finally the three were side-tracked and allowed the line of waiting people to enter, eventually settling the difficulty by the mother and child returning home and the father witnessing the performance alone.

Just a side note while I think of it. I dislike the word "performance" exceedingly, as applied to Mrs. Fiske, the term suggesting trained animals or something of that nature, but I make use of it for want of a better word. "Show" is so utterly detestable and obnoxious to a refined person that it ought never to be applied to anything unless it *is* a "show" pure and simple, and nothing else.

In another place,—and these are but a few cases out of hundreds and hundreds,—a couple of parents left the theater after being refused the admittance of their child, but without any undue remonstrance or abuse. A little later

on, in fact, while the first act was in progress, a very determined but dapper little man came into the lobby and asked to see Mrs. Fiske's manager, and I assumed for argument's sake that I was he.

He looked me over, and for the life of me I could not help thinking of a line in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," to wit,—"My name's Marks, I'm a lawyer. Ain't you afraid?"

To resume. On what grounds did I refuse to admit a child to see Mrs. Fiske? On the ground that a little child could no more be entertained by her or understand "Rosmersholm" than I could the hieroglyphics of ancient Mexico, and would in consequence become weary and liable to cry or talk aloud, and so disturb both player and audience.

But if the manager of the theater was willing, what right had I to prevent it?

Because for the time being we were partners; and, as I represented about seven-tenths of the interest, our rules, that made for the success of our production, were paramount to any local usage.

Why did not we announce these rules in advance?

Because people were supposed to have sufficient intelligence to realize that the theater was no place for little children.

The gentleman argued further, until I inquired what his business might be?

He was the editor of the *Morning Something-or-Other.*

"Very well," said I. "Do you allow advance agents to come into your office and tell you how you shall conduct your paper, when you have established rules that have been found from experience to be necessary to your success?"

He allowed that he did not.

"Now, then, I will tell you what you will do," I added. "You will return to your office and write a denunciatory article about our rule that excludes small children, and the more you write the better it will be for us, for it will prove to its readers that we take every precaution to protect them in the enjoyment of what they have paid their money for,

and are entitled to expect. The thousand or more people here to-night will rejoice, while the two disappointed ones, who were dead-heads, by the way, and perhaps on one of your press passes, I don't know,—are the sole losers. Now be a good boy, take off your hat and coat, and go inside and witness a *good* performance undisturbed."

His fires were drawn and the steam went down. He would like to, but he had a lot of work to do, as his was a morning paper, and he really couldn't,—thank you, he really couldn't. And so he passed on and out of my line of vision.

Naturally I was interested to see the morning edition of the *Thingamy Whatever*, but not a line appeared on the subject of the infantile edict, and the dramatic review was all that we could have desired.

In Yankton, S. D., a baby, a little tiny baby, was brought by its parents a hundred and forty miles to see Mrs. Fiske. I couldn't refuse those parents, and so on a pile of overcoats, on a couch in the manager's office, the

child was laid, and I kept watch over its slumbers the entire evening, while the mother at the end of each act came out and gave it attention.

Mr. Guy Smith, my predecessor as well as successor with Mrs. Fiske, once discovered a smuggled baby in the front row, the mother absolutely refusing to take it out; but as it was squally she passed it over to the very diffident Mr. Smith, saying,—"*I* won't take it out, but you may," and he did, and had that baby on his hands the remainder of the evening. Scores and scores of similar instances might be related.

Another prolific source of annoyance, formerly, was the peanut,—I mean the *live* peanut, in the shell; but since the era of salted peanuts the annoyance has almost disappeared.

Mrs. Fiske could hear the snapping of a peanut shell a mile away, and as for babies—I sometimes thought she felt their presence, for I have gotten notes from the stage,—goodness knows when she got a chance to write them,—to the effect that there was certainly a

baby in the house somewhere, and she thought in the left-hand section of the balcony, and two or three rows from the front. She was never mistaken, for search soon located the infant that had been permitted to enter by a good-natured but disobedient doorkeeper.

I have received enough notes on peanuts to make a symposium on that favorite and fortunately healthful article of food, that would reach from Boston to San Francisco. I could generally locate the offender. Once, however, repeated messages from the stage failed utterly to locate the peanut disorder in the audience. Ushers patrolled the aisles, the gallery policeman strolled down each side of the upper section and looked fierce, for a gallery policeman, but to no purpose, and the evening passed without a clew. Mrs. Fiske was certain that she was not mistaken, but I assured her that every effort to locate the culprit had been made, but had failed. The next afternoon as I was passing from the front of the house to the stage, back of the boxes the cleaners were sweeping up a lot of peanut shells in the *stage box*.

It would sometimes occur that the manager of the theater would have a season contract with some vendor of peanuts, candy, and gum, or such diverting and more or less delectable articles of food or mastication, and could not stop the sale even for a night, as it once happened in Washington, *D. C.*,—mind you.

My only resource, therefore, was to buy off the Italian merchant, and we invited him to call in to the manager's office, where I inquired of him what he estimated his profit to be on peanuts alone for the week, but to be careful and not set it too high, or the manager would raise the price for his concession next season.

He allowed that he made about five dollars a week on peanuts, and I gave him that amount, with the agreement on his part not to sell peanuts either in or within a hundred yards of the theater that week, with a very peaceful week as the result.

Another serious annoyance to Mrs. Fiske was the advertising curtain, and wherever possible it was eliminated altogether, and when

not possible to achieve this the curtain was left down as short a time as was consistent with existing contracts. These curtains in many of the theaters she was forced into were perfect horrors, dreams of the Rarebit Fiend and concoctions of a weirdly disordered brain. In addition to this we were confronted at times by three-sheet posters on each side of the proscenium arch, announcing the following attraction, and sometimes it would be "The Venus Burlesquers," "Mostly Girls," in their great production of "Bare Facts, or a Night in a Turkish Bath." Again it might chance to be Jim Johnson in a sparring bout with the celebrated "Chicken" who defeated "Slugging Bilson" in San Francisco.

These announcements were generally removed on request, as no contract interfered, but it was occasionally done grudgingly and with the argument thrown in that it was the regular thing, and that "our folks" were used to it. Also we were regaled with the information that last week "Billy Binks' Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Perfect Society Girls"

"REBECCA WEST."

Facing Page 105.

Burlesquers were here in the "Modest Maidens" and Mrs. Fiske's three-sheets were up there all through the performance, and *they* didn't object, in fact, the manager of the show praised Mrs. Fiske, and said she was "all right," that she played a little over the heads of them guys, but she was *all right*.

We had to be cruel and unreciprocal and persist in our request for the removal of the objectionable posters.

These are among the things Mrs. Fiske had to encounter for a dozen or more years when searching out houses "not in the trust."

Perhaps these little incidents, which, on my word, are but a very, *very* few of the actual occurrences and annoyances that we encountered, will give her admirers some idea of the difficulties of giving perfect performances without unnecessary noise and consequent distraction of the attention of the audience. That she struggled through this so long and so successfully is a miracle, especially as no catering to a lower standard or relaxation of eternal vigilance ever resulted.

IX

SOME PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

IT seems quite natural to infer, from the semblance to mental agony that is assumed by the actor in the portrayal of his character, that the anguish must of necessity be felt by the player; that when off the stage for some considerable time the effect of the simulation of suffering must be continued, or the next scene would not possess the requisite vitality and high pressure of effect.

Should an actor do this constantly, and really "feel" the part when off, the strongest of iron constitutions would break down and give way under the strain. No, it must be thrown off as a cloak is, and the mind and the system relaxed. We hear of people who feel the part at all times, on or off the stage during a performance, but it is doubtful if this is really the case, although it sounds interesting

to say so. An actor is an *actor* and not the real thing; he or she *acts*, and the better the simulation the better the actor. To go on and merely play one's self is not acting; there was no "acting" in Denman Thompson's Joshua Whitcomb; it merely fitted his personality, and he incidentally portrayed a gentle and sweet-mannered lover of the country and the farm.

Natural acting is not necessarily acting one's self, but acting naturally the character assumed, as Jefferson did Rip, and that was acting, and it was not Jefferson. All this applies to Mrs. Fiske, who is the high priestess of naturalism, and yet not Mrs. Fiske.

In the course of nearly every play there is a "rest" period, and when intimate friends are to be conducted to "back stage" during a performance, that is the time allotted for visitation, and the only time, with this exception—should the "rest" period immediately precede the strong scene of the play, the one that taxes mind, body, and nerves to the greatest extent, no interruption for any purpose is ever per-

mitted. After the scene rather than before is the preferable time, for in that case other ideas and conversation tend to relax the strain on the emotions.

Truly, I do not think there is another star of any magnitude that troubles her manager less about the business details than Mrs. Fiske. She never has a box-office statement or a statement of the week, and almost never inquires what the house is, or the week. If on an exceptionally good week the receipts are told to her, she shows less interest in that than she would in a newspaper clipping about some horse or dog that had been rescued from injury.

It is the same with respect to the handling of the business details by her representative in front; in my experience she rarely even suggested rules and methods, and whenever she had any request to make it was usually prefaced with,—"I am sorry to trouble you," or, "When convenient," will you do so and so? The utmost courtesy always pervaded her requests, which were never sent as orders, and

for that reason any wish of hers was a pleasure to receive and execute.

Frequently treasurers of theaters are required to give five to seven statements nightly, but in our case it has been many times their good fortune to be required to furnish but one. This would occur, of course, when there were no royalties to pay.

It was part of my trusted duty to open her mail and give to Mrs. Fiske such as I knew she would wish to receive, such as all personal letters, communications on humane interests, or such business matters as concerned her affairs. With other mail it was my duty to exercise discretion, and pass to her or withhold, as I thought best; and as evidence of the high plane of respect and regard upon which all the American people placed her, I must record that there was never an improper or disrespectful communication sent to her during all the time I was with her. I take this as a very high compliment to an actress, when so many foolish people think all women on the stage are easy game. They never made a greater mistake in

their lives, for after over forty years of such association I will match the women of the stage against any other profession in the world for honor, honesty and chastity.

Mrs. Fiske is at all times unceasingly at work, allowing herself little time for relaxation, but at one time was exceedingly fond of visiting the moving picture shows, with one or two veils over her face, and sitting well back toward the entrance. The best of the foreign representations of standard plays by good organizations were interesting to her, and doubtless provided her with an idea now and then, for often it is only the germ idea that expands in another's brain with elaborate results.

When attending another theater, as she sometimes does on a Wednesday matinee,—she rarely giving a mid-week performance herself —she would like, if she could, to occupy an obscure balcony seat, or at the back downstairs; but if that is not feasible or advisable, and a box must be taken, she generally ensconces herself behind the drapery, in as inconspicuous a position as possible. There is absolutely noth-

ing of the spectacular or "theatrical" about Mrs. Fiske.

Keen? No eagle that circles the air, no x-ray that pierces the opaque, no judge that wears the ermine, has keener insight into the working of the human brain than she has. It would be as useless to attempt to deceive her with a lie as to get eighty per cent. for a forty per cent. road show. When listening to the recital of any disputed affair, it is her habit to partially close her eyes and look the narrator squarely in the face. Woe be to him if he tells not the truth, for it will be as evident to her as the presence of the sun at noonday with a cloudless sky.

Her sense of humor is unusually keen, and no good joke is ever lost to her. No maps or guides to such are required, for if the situation possesses a grain of humor it will receive its full appreciation at her hands. Not only this, but often when others are dense and fail to see where the humor lays, she, quick as a flash, is there, like a salmon at the fly. It is this faculty that enables her to see values in

comedy lines and situations, and to bring forward in the enactment of them, where other readers of the original manuscript failed to discover them, the subtle humor of the situations.

The rare quality of never speaking ill of anyone is one of her valuable possessions, for I never heard any remark emanate from her that was derogatory of another. Neither is she given to criticising her fellow-players, or in fact discussing them in any manner.

Her acquaintanceship among the prominent stars of the day, either female or male, is, I think, very limited, other than possibly a very few, whom she may very rarely happen to run across; but with the outside world it is very extensive, and extends to the highest in all professions and spheres of activity.

The late Robert G. Ingersoll was a great admirer of hers, and the whole family were much attached to her. The same might be said of Mark Twain, whose dapper little figure, bushy head, and fierce brows were frequently seen at the theater when in New York.

George W. Cable might be added to the rest,

and scores of other literary people who delighted to do her honor.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of those who admired her genius, as he has personally told me, but *possibly*,—mind, I say *possibly*,—his regard has been dimmed by her attitude towards his African trip for the purpose of slaughtering wild animals. Perhaps Mr. Roosevelt is broad enough to dissociate the personal side of the matter from the humane, and not to regard Mrs. Fiske the less for the public utterances in opposition to his course.

To her, the example of so exalted and prominent a man going out in so spectacular a way to "kill something" must of necessity have a powerful influence on the small boy whose ideas are now forming and who would desire later in life to go and kill something for himself. I dare say Mrs. Fiske was not so disturbed by the fact of the small percentage of reduction in the numbers of lions, hippopotami, tigers, rhinoceri, and others of the African jungle put to death by short and quick means as she was by the example it set, and

possibly Mr. Roosevelt has no greater admirer on other lines. I don't know. I am merely expressing my own ideas on that score, and not from any certain knowledge.

I am not "rooting" for Mr. Roosevelt, but whatever one may think of him, there is no denying the wonderful scope of his ideas and the breadth and extent of his mental reach. Whether it is Plutarch, Cæsar, Daniel Boone, Napoleon, Angelo, Lincoln, political history, natural history, art, science, literature, cow punching, architecture, engineering, or whatever, he is equally conversant. He had the advantage of a college education, while Mrs. Fiske did not; however, she would be just as much at ease in conversation with Mr. Edison or Alexander Graham Bell, a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic bishop, or a Protestant divine, as she would be with Mr. Frohman or Mr. Belasco.

Here are two minds of great scope and attainments, and the fact of a divergence of ideas on one vital subject should not lead either to a repudiation of the other in toto.

One of her oldest and most intimate friends,

whose knowledge of Mrs. Fiske covers her "prehistoric" as well as her career during her "second time on earth," is Montgomery Pfister, the "Everybody's Friend" on the Cincinnati *Commercial-Tribune.*

Mr. Pfister has been an ardent admirer of Mrs. Fiske's genius during nearly all of her career, and,—yet, remember, friends, Mr. Pfister is not an old man,—he is the repository of more reminiscence of Mrs. Fiske, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving and others than any other living man probably. He is in the happy position of having more friends than he knows what to do with, in illustration of which he once complained to Murat Halstead, the then owner and editor of the *Commercial*, that something would have to be done to enable him to do his work, he was so overwhelmed with calls from his friends in the profession.

Halstead admitted that it was too bad, "but," he added, "I know of but one worse situation."

On being asked what that was, he replied: "Not having *anyone* call."

Pfister's door is always open, and a more hearty, companionable man doesn't live.

X

INTERVIEWS—MAIDS—HACKS

ONE of Mrs. Fiske's greatest aversions is for the interview. Now there are interviews and interviews, as well as interviewers and interviewers, and if what one actually says, and not what the interviewer wants to think one said, when he makes up his copy, were printed, then the fear of the thing would be lessened. It is not altogether the fear of being misquoted that causes Mrs. Fiske's dislike of this form of publicity, but the fact that the interview is such an omnivorous beast that it questions not whether its victim is of the throne, the stage, the government, clergy, prize ring, murderer's cell, the divorce court, the altar, or any other place. It is therefore, in my opinion, so common and so commonplace a means of exploitation that it becomes valueless.

Facing Page 116. MRS. FISKE IN A SCENE FROM "SALVATION NELL."

And yet it exists, and will continue to exist to the end of time, and probably the interview with Miss Susie Tightspangle is enjoyed by one set of admirers while the interviews with J. Pierpont Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, or Mrs. Fiske are as eagerly perused by quite different readers.

There are newspaper men with whom it is a delight to talk; one feels that they are trustworthy, tactful, and comprehending. They avoid misrepresentation and unwise publicity; they either omit that about which their memories or their notes are vague, or verify, before publication, all news stories, if important, by further inquiry.

In a far Northwestern city a female interviewer who succeeded in getting a few words with Mrs. Fiske, not long after the hatchet was buried and the pipe of peace was still smoking, published an elaborated version of the strife, with headlines that represented Mrs. Fiske as still with the war paint on and, Ajax-like, defying the lightning of the Syndicate. Nothing could have been further from the truth, and

as such things carry like a flash it caused her much chagrin and indignation.

Occasions like that are numerous, and when multiplied it is no wonder that a sensitive woman rebels against being interviewed. Then there is another perfectly abhorrent feature of the inconsiderate interviewer, and that is the gushing desire to be "nice," and over-elaborate description of the color of her eyes; the artistic curve of the lip; the poise of the head; the perfectly sweet gown she had on; how regular and pearly her teeth were; the dainty slipper peeping from its covering of silk, or near-silk, or crepon, or whatever she wore at the time; and a whole grist of those cloying things that can give mal-de-mer points as stomach stirrers.

In the middle West a few years ago I was called on the telephone to obtain an interview for a representative of one of the numerous dailies,—of a decided tendency to yellow journalism.

I hedged, of course. What was the subject upon which they wished to interview Mrs.

Fiske, and was what she might say of any interest to the public? The subject was, they said, that one of the greatest of the European actresses had stated in an interview given to a representative of their paper, that Mrs. Fiske was a *very* great actress, and a few more things in the same strain, and they would like an interview with her on that interview.

What did they expect Mrs. Fiske to say? Did they expect her to agree with the lady and openly admit that she *was*, and that she had long thought so, the only wonder of it being that she had not discovered the fact sooner? Or did they expect her to deny the allegation and argue it out with her, giving reasons and affidavits why she was not? Probably Mrs. Fiske had a scrapbook full of clippings from Laporte, Peru, Jonesboro, Atwater Junction, and other metropolitan patent insides asserting that they had seen her, and that there was nothing doing, or words to that effect. Georgie Spotlight had her beat a mile, in "The Cabbage Patch."

There is no more use arguing with a news-

paper man of that caliber when on the trail of the interview than it is to blow at the moon to extinguish its light.

The matter was compromised by Mrs. Fiske writing a brief article on the subject of a National Conservatoire, as suggested in the original interview, and declined to "touch sparingly" even "as 'twere far off," as Richard said, the mention of herself.

Honest interviewers will agree, and carry out that agreement, to submit a proof of their article, in which case the safety of the victim is guaranteed; but there have been those who have promised and have not fulfilled, endeavoring to shirk the responsibility by laying it to the lack of time after the proof was received, or shouldering it upon the city editor; anything, anybody, to let themselves out.

Had Mrs. Fiske been a man she would have made a great diplomat, for tact is one of the most prominent branches of her tree of attainments. Tact is inborn; it is a natural product of the mine of wisdom, and if it is not there it cannot be placed there, excepting as one

"salts" a mine, and the lode is therefore artificial and soon exhausted.

Every word and mental attitude toward her interlocutor is weighed and without an error, a quality that is of inestimable value in a public character. A bore can be dismissed by her with the greatest ease, especially when he enlarges upon the fact that he "played her in the old Opalsport Opera House in 1802," and he goes away with the impression that she was doing him a very great favor and herself a sacrifice by shortening the interview.

Apparently Mrs. Fiske has no favorite type of maid, for those attending upon her during my time were of various nationalities. Perhaps she was only trying one after another to determine ultimately which was the more satisfactory.

At one time it was a Swede, or perhaps a Norwegian, I don't know which,—at all events she was a Scandinavian. Now that I think of it she must have been a Swede, for she called our electrician, whose name was John,—"Yonny," and one day she approached the clerk

of the hotel to ask if he would let "Meeses Feesk have the yuce of a lemon?"

"What?" inquired the puzzled official. "Wants what?"

"The yuce of a lemon," she replied.

"Certainly, of course, if she will return it when she is done with it. Front! Get the lady a lemon and, say, get it back when she is through using it." The clerk was evidently a joker.

"She only want the *yuce*, she want it pinched, see, so," said the maid, as she graphically indicated with her hands the usual process of squeezing a lemon.

"Oh, I see," the clerk now exclaimed, as a great big ray of intelligence penetrated his brain. Then to the boy. "Go to the bar and get the *juice* of a lemon in a glass, and take it up to 312. All right, miss, I understand."

Sometimes the maid's English got her into greater trouble, for, to her, it was like an unbroken broncho, and humped itself up and threw her completely, as it did at another time

when she made one of her many visits to the hotel clerk.

This occurred when Mrs. Fiske had been in the hotel but a few hours, and the maid did the first approaching act to this particular clerk with the startling message: "Messes Feesk dunk."

"*What!*" The same explosive exclamation as the other clerk had indulged in.

"Meeses Feesk dunk?"

"Is she? I'm sorry. Won't she be able to play to-night? What can I do for her? Have you ever tried strong coffee? There was a man——" The clerk would have gone on and written a prescription free, then and there, but the Scandinavian maiden knew that her English had thrown her by this time, so she gathered the fragments of her broken collection together and hastened to remount her lingual steed.

"You not onnerstan. Her *dunk;* she want her *dunk!*" exclaimed Christina, or Helma, or Selma, or whatever her name was.

"Oh!" same as before, same light, same kind

of brain. "Front! Ask the porter if Mrs. Fiske's trunk has arrived, and if so tell him to send it up to 67 right away. All right, miss. Excuse me, I didn't understand you at first."

"Tank you. I am welcome." And that international imbroglio was transformed into an *entente cordiale* without the aid of the navy.

Mrs. Fiske has had German maids, and colored maids, and, as I have stated, descendants of the Norsemen, but to be successful as maids they must be born to its requirements, and never descend to it from a higher elevation. As to rising to the position, I do not know just where the chrysalis stage does come in, for no one has been able to distinguish the caterpillar age, and after the chrysalis they have always had "vera mooch experience"; but then a caterpillar's year is only about equal to one of our days, you know.

I think one of the greatest griefs to a colored maid is the fact that she cannot consistently make use of broken and discarded fragments of Continental English without the fraud being discovered, although one tried it

once by saying, "Colored? Did you thing Ar was colored? No, sir. One of my descendants come from the Col-o-nul Duts [I may have to map that—Colonial Dutch], and the other descended from the French Hottentots." Presumably Huguenots. The result of this grafting was a *peach*. Mr. Burbank, please take notice.

One advantage that the white maid has over the colored, is that when traveling in the South they are allowed anywhere that their mistress is allowed, while the colored sister is allowed nowhere that her mistress is allowed excepting in the theater; and has to be boarded out, by the porter, or one of his kind.

On the other hand the colored maid, especially when pretty, has one great advantage over her white sister, and that benefit transpires when traveling and something is wanted from the diner, and the more particularly out of hours or against the strict rules of the company, for no porter, cook, or waiter is recorded by students of natural history who can resist the wiles of said captivating maid, not one,—

not when she looks "goo-goo" at him. In that respect she can give the paleface cards, spades, and all the trumps and still win hands down.

Mrs. Fiske was at one time very fond of the automobile, and employed it on every and all occasions; but all at once went back to the more lowly hack, and that lowly hack in some of the one-night stands was a relic, a curio, an heirloom, handed down from one generation of Jehus to another.

Once while traveling in the far southern portion of old Mexico, from Oaxaca to Mitla, my wife and I were honored with one of these antediluvian conveyances, that had been a victoria at one time. What it was then, I forget, but it belonged to the same pre-glacial period, at any rate. Excuse this divergence, I will not do it again, but I merely use it as an illustration that Mexico is a land of wonderful ruins and prehistoric remains. These carriages or hacks have untold millions of funerals they have attended chalked up to their credit, somewhere, I suppose, and the odor of salty tears outodors the perfume of the orange

blossoms that in its palmy days permeated its upholstery. Sometimes when this "best kerridge in town" was discovered in waiting at the station Mrs. Fiske balked, felt the necessity for exercise, and walked from the station to the hotel.

Why don't the "pure food and drug law" folks get after these germ-filled boxes on wheels, or else why do not the museums buy them up and display them along with the fossil remains of the icthyosaurus and, as the schoolboy said, the megaphones.

We would discover sometimes that "the boy lied," and that there was a later edition of hack, a sort of edition de luxe, as it were, which was then at the funeral of the wealthiest man in town; but we could have it to-night.

One feature of the hack business that was especially and justly annoying to Mrs. Fiske, and to me probably more exasperating, was this playful little swindle. In a small city, with the house as usual filled, the occasion being an event, perhaps, and a carriage engaged ten days in advance by our advance man, after

the performance it would be raining. Do you suppose that livery man would keep his agreement? Not for one instant. He would never send a carriage to us until the last possible local patron had been squeezed out of that audience, no matter whether they had engaged in advance or not,—that cut no figure whatever,—and although Mrs. Fiske had been the means of bringing him this avalanche of business, in answer to my protest he would reply, "Mrs. Fiske can wait."

Now wouldn't that—Ugh! What are you going to do with a man like that, and there being no unwritten law on the subject to get you off?

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

The Unwelcome Mrs. Hatch

Becky Sharp

MRS. FISKE IN VARIOUS CHARACTERS.

XI

THE STAGE CHILD AND THE FACTORY LAW

IS it reasonable,—I ask you strenuous advocates of the application of the "factory" law or the "child labor" law, or under whatever guise it may appear,—is it *reasonable* to suppose that the kind of woman I have faithfully described, and who has the gentleness of character and the abhorrence of cruelty and injustice that she has, would advocate the annulment of an application of law that absolutely prohibits the appearance of a child under fourteen or sixteen on the stage, if she did not believe that it is wrong in its effect and unjust toward those who are honest and well-meaning?

Is not Mrs. Fiske qualified to know whereof she speaks? Is not Miss Lotta also qualified, and where are there more estimable women, or women more respected or worthy of respect?

Now a "labor" law is one that is supposed to regulate *labor*, and not *morals*. If a law were to be passed entitled, "A Law to Regulate Labor and Morals," then the mask would be off. One might as well expect to see an elephant and a giraffe yoked together to draw a load.

When an analysis of the amount of "labor" a child does on the stage is made, it would be found that it does not average over an hour in the day probably, and no child ever goes to it with a dislike for it. Every minute that he passes on the stage is a delight and a benefit to him. There are plays, to be sure, in which a child or several children are required for two hours, or two and a half even, like "The Blue Bird," but they are exceedingly rare. There are not more than two or three plays of the character of "The Blue Bird" and "Peter Pan" in a generation, and can *anyone* be found to object to *them?*

Are they not a benefit to the world in their sweetness and purity and moral? But without children what are they? Are not "The

Prince and The Pauper," and "Little Lord Fauntleroy" delightful? Are not little Meenie Van Winkle and Hendrick Vedder charming? How long do *they* "work"? Probably not a half hour. Is it arduous, think you? Does it cripple them, stunt their growth, dull their mentality, kill their ambition?

I challenge anyone to find a pale, wan, unhappy, dirty, ragged, tired,—or *anything* other than a well kept and well cared for,—child among the entire lot of "dramatic" stage children. I will explain what I mean by the word "dramatic" in this connection. I refer to those who play parts or appear in representations of drama in its broad sense, and do not include acrobats and dancers.

In the great days of the drama probably three-quarters of the greatest actors began as children, although to-day that proportion does not hold; but, then, where *are* the *great* actors?

It has been shown that Mrs. Fiske was first seen on the stage as a baby; then she sang in a Scottish kilt, and next played a small Shake-

spearian character, arriving at the age of sixteen at a fixed position of stardom, where the law now says stage children must begin.

But they get no education, some say. Is Mrs. Fiske illiterate? was Edwin Forrest illiterate? or,—oh, scores, hundreds, of similar examples among eminent players?

Lotta was a star even earlier than Mrs. Fiske, and achieved fame, fortune, respect, and admiration; and, let me say now, she gave more good, clean, honest delight to more people than any other living soul. Eliminate Lotta from her period on the stage and you darken the light of millions of homes by the process.

If the mistaken advocates of the law in Massachusetts, Illinois, Louisiana, and perhaps other States, and for its extension to more States, will come out into the open and acknowledge that it is not solely because of their actual hours of "labor," but that they do not think it for their moral advantage, then the ambush would be discovered.

A cause is measured by its effect, and if the people of eminence, or even of lesser note, on

the stage who began as children will not compare favorably morally and mentally with the professions of law, medicine, commerce, literature, art, science, or what you will, then I miss my calculations.

New York alone has a sane law on the subject, and one that few object to. The State allows a permit to be issued for a child's appearance on the stage when the circumstances and surroundings appear proper. This authority is vested in the mayors of cities, and it is by him deputized to recognized and trustworthy agents or societies. In Massachusetts the law allows no child under sixteen to labor for compensation after 6 P. M., and none under fourteen to work *at all*.

The case against myself as manager of the "Salvation Nell" company, in which three children of about twelve or fourteen years were used, was appealed to the Supreme Court, and lost, because former President Eliot of Harvard College and Bishop Lawrence appeared against me. Estimable gentlemen both, cultivated and worthy of everybody's respect, *but*, what

do they know of these conditions, and how can they object to the "labor" of these children?

If the supporters of the law will open their minds to fact and reason, and dissociate in their minds the "labor" view from the sentimental, they must see the inequity and injustice of the law's application to the stage child.

Mrs. Fiske *knows*, Lotta *knows*, Francis Wilson *knows*, whereof they speak, and I am going to reproduce here an address delivered by Mrs. Fiske at the benefit for the National Alliance for the Protection of Stage Children at the Century Theater in New York City, February 9, 1912, and, let me add, that Mrs. Fiske prepares every line of her addresses herself. Her address at Harvard College and other similar papers were never written, edited, or influenced by another person. Not bad for one who began as a baby and continued on the stage all her life. Before presenting her article, however, I want to suggest one result of the continuation and extension of this prohibition to other States, and that is this:

The book-play has been the aim of most au-

thors for years, and in literature and art child life is sweet, interesting, and wholesome. If the author depicts a child, the most lovable and delightful character that was ever written, and that tends to the good in every child, woman, and man, he is liable to lose the opportunity and remuneration that a dramatization of that book would create.

The public also loses the realization of that child on the stage, because a stupid interpretation of an otherwise good law prohibits it. One result of this will be the gradual elimination of children from the literature of the future, because the author can expect no return for his work other than what the book publication itself produces.

Is this a consummation to be wished, devoutly or otherwise, or is it not?

Now here is Mrs. Fiske's paper,—

"The narrow prejudice that prevailed formerly has practically disappeared. To-day the theater is better understood and more widely esteemed and supported by all classes of people than at any previous time in its history. And yet, from an entirely new quarter and upon very different grounds it is again becoming the

object of fierce detraction and violent attack, in a movement for an enactment of laws to prevent children from appearing on the stage. Already the organized effort has been successful in several of the States, and the managers of the child labor campaign are working vigorously to procure similar legislation in all of the States. The National Alliance for the Protection of Stage Children was formed to combat that injustice and preserve the liberty of the child actors of the present and the future. The great majority of actors are in complete sympathy with this laudable purpose. No fair-minded man or woman, having knowledge of the facts and the truth, can fail to give unqualified approval of the work of the Alliance.

"The people of the stage favor judicious legislation for the protection of stage children—such wise, sane regulations, for example, as exist in our State of New York; but they intend to fight to the end against the drastic pernicious measures urged by people who can see no difference between the conditions affecting child actors and child workers in factories. No doubt these people are well meaning. In emancipating children from the slavery of manual labor in the factories they have accomplished noble results. They mean well, but their ignorance of the theater is dense, and gross, and colossal.

"They do not know the life of the stage child or its conditions. No outsider can possibly understand it. Only those of us who have lived our lives in the theater really know.

"Undoubtedly there are certain phases of theater

life that would be injurious to the health or the moral welfare of a child, just as there are injurious phases in every other walk of life, and from these children should be protected. But the legitimate dramatic stage has nothing in common with these phases of the theater world. They are so remote that it scarcely knows them, and has no contact with them. A child in the legitimate theatrical environment is as safe as the child in the nursery or in the school.

"To deprive a gifted child of the invaluable schooling of the stage is to deprive him of his inherited birthright. It is trite and perhaps superfluous to call attention to the established fact that the greatest names of the theater past and present, are the names of artists who became actors in childhood. They are the illustrious examples, but there are hundreds of others less distinguished but equally corroborative of the value of an early beginning in the dramatic career. The misguided zeal of some of the professional and amateur reformers has led them at times to specious misrepresentation, and at other times to misguided mendacity respecting the question.

"In the name of the National Alliance for the Protection of stage children we thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the support, both moral and material, that your presence to-day gives to this cause, and we hope that you will continue to lend us your sympathy and approval."

How can any receptive, broad, reasoning

mind fail to agree with the attitude of protest taken by the dramatic profession as a unit, considering the condition that has existed for time out of mind, and with never one protest from its members?

When the victims appeal, it is time to come to their relief.

What does the farmer, or the country merchant, or even the city merchant, in our legislatures know about the requirements of the stage? Estimable as they may be, and qualified as they may be on general principles of agriculture, manufacture, commerce, and common law, one would not expect them to pass upon the merits or demerits of a Rubens, an Angelo, a Titian, a Corot, Millet, or Tintoretto.

If you are ill, you call in one skilled in medicine,—unless you are Christian Science, and then possibly you call no one, and let the disease cure itself. If a bone is broken a skillful surgeon is employed; if you have a case in court, and the verdict hinges upon the quality of a piece of goods, you would call in an expert in that line, not a farmer.

Were it a dispute over vegetables, land, fences, cattle, or roads, then the farmer is required, and not an alienist. In short, it should not be the layman who passes judgment where great interests are involved, but skilled judgment that is without bias.

How many cases of cruelty to children have we all read or heard of in private families, by inhuman parents or step-parents? How many in the schools? Now let me ask if anyone at any time ever heard of a case of cruelty to a child of the theater? Honest Injun now,—hands up, how many? Let me tell you that there is not a more carefully looked after and petted child in your homes than behind the footlights of the theater, nor a more contented one. Then why in the name of all the great writers of all ages, and in the name of Justice, should the sweet and elevating purity of child life in the drama be banished forever from the stage?

XII

WHY MRS. FISKE HAS NOT PLAYED IN LONDON —FORMULA FOR A SUCCESSFUL PLAY FOR HER—SUMMING UP

I HAVE now given as faithful a description of the progress, achievements, and the personal characteristics of Minnie Maddern Fiske as my weak powers will permit, and the reader who has waded through it all will perhaps have a clearer idea of the human side of a great actress than when he began; but sometimes those who think they know a public character quite well are themselves often in error. For instance, a young son of Murat Halstead, who was at one time present in the audience witnessing a performance of "Mary of Magdala," overheard some discussion between parties in the row in front, as to whether the long and luxurious red hair of Mary was Mrs. Fiske's or not. Proud of his acquaintanceship with

the distinguished actress, and doubtless wishing to exploit that knowledge to Mrs. Fiske's advantage, as well as his own, young Halstead leaned forward and begged pardon, but wished to say that as he knew the lady well, he could vouch for the fact that the hair they so much admired was her own.

It wasn't, but how easily one can be mistaken, and this young man's statement would be taken, under certain circumstances, in a court of law as authoritative evidence. Mrs. Fiske has hair of average length, but not of brilliant red, rather pale, and at times almost blonde in appearance.

Since a small child she has never played a Shakespearian character, and feels herself to be hopelessly modern; but there are many of her admirers who would delight to see the application of her inimitable powers for high comedy acting applied to Rosalind, Beatrice, or Imogen.

Why does Mrs. Fiske not play in England?

That is a question many ask. In reply I will say I do not know.

It must be that she has not herself chosen to

do so. In my humble opinion, and from my knowledge of and experience with London audiences, she would be the biggest success of the age. English people, however, are indissolubly wedded to tradition, and perhaps might not accept her Tess, as not Hardy's, or that it is not English, while in fact it is greater than Hardy's; it is an *international* Tess, a *universal* Tess, idealized, although not interpreted with a provincial dialect or accent that tagged it as of the soil.

"Becky Sharp" would very likely at the time of its production by Mrs. Fiske have been welcomed enthusiastically, had not several people squat upon the claim and pre-empted the ground before she could get there. They were English people, and a beautiful trait of the English people is loyalty to established favorites.

Ibsen, as a matinee or a repertoire production, not as a sole reliance, seemed feasible.

Mrs. Fiske's methods and style are entirely her own, so there is no precedent upon which to establish any calculation. She requires an

ensemble of artists about her keyed to her pitch, elsewise there is a discordant note and an inharmony that fails to create the proper impression.

These are my ideas—in which Mrs. Fiske is in no way responsible. So great an actress as Mrs. Fiske might very likely sweep all precedents and impressions to the four winds.

Mrs. Fiske has written several short plays herself, one,—"The Eyes of the Heart," in which George Arliss was superb. Another "The Light From St. Agnes," a little masterpiece; and still another, "The Rose." Each of these was a gem of literary and dramatic construction. She also wrote a play called "Not Guilty," and in collaboration with Mr. Fiske another called "Fontenelle." Were she to take the time there is little doubt that she could write a play of intense interest and true dramatic technique. Her own experience and knowledge have equipped her fully for that work.

One difficulty Mrs. Fiske labors under is the inability to get suitable plays, although they are submitted by the hundreds; but when one

comes to measure them up to her standard they almost invariably fall far short of requirements.

If one could lay out a play with plans and specifications, as an architect does a house, my study of Mrs. Fiske at several thousand performances might result in something like this—a sort of ten commandments to be observed.

First—All construction to be of first class material.

Second—The acts, or stories, to be three, or not over four.

Third—The lines to be modern, and on a refined high-comedy plane.

Fourth—The finish to be delicate and of true humor.

Fifth—No "tailor made" or "millinery" adornment of the character for Mrs. Fiske.

Sixth—Throw around this character a strong interest, and provide opportunities for impressive pauses as well as scenes of action in absolute silence.

Seventh—Dialogue at times with the opposite part, of smart repartee and snappy wit.

Eighth—Make the other characters as smart and as strong as possible; nothing can take a play or a "situation" from Mrs. Fiske.

Ninth—Adhere strictly to consistency.

Tenth—A gripping undercurrent of plot that is felt at all times to underlay the sparkle and foam that float upon the surface.

All good houses are not alike, and so all good plays differ, therefore I do not mean to insinuate that no other list of specifications would fit her, or she it; but I do think the garment that fits her best is the one that a dramatic tailor would model as the architect would a house, on these lines.

Her Hedda Gabler is a classic, a presentation of an Ibsen character without a flaw; and even Hedda Gabler has humor, keen and refined, but oh, so grim! It is like the badinage that one might expect between a couple of undertakers, whose fund of anecdote was culled from the incidents encountered in their trade.

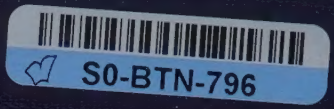
Mrs. Fiske is now in the heyday of her career; she is at an age when her powers are fully developed and her perceptions keenest.

What she has done with Cyprienne, Tess, Becky Sharp, Cynthia Karslake, and possibly Leah Kleschna, will live, but what she will do in the future is for the playwright to provide and for her to accomplish. She has no imitator, no follower, and will leave no successor. Her personality and methods are unique, and hers alone. Her magnetism is not transferable to any heir to her position on the stage, nor is it teachable. Genius is as well non-transferable, unless through the blood, which leaves the stage hopeless, at least, as at present situated.

An inventory of Mrs. Fiske's assets reveals Genius, the spark that illuminates all she touches; Magnetism, the "wireless" communication with everyone in the house across the footlights: Intelligence, the power of comprehension of an author's meaning; Intuition, the faculty of getting "inside the skin" of a part; Humor, of a rare order; Cultivation, the manner that accompanies true knowledge.

And so I leave her.

Buenos noches.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